CITY HILIGHTS

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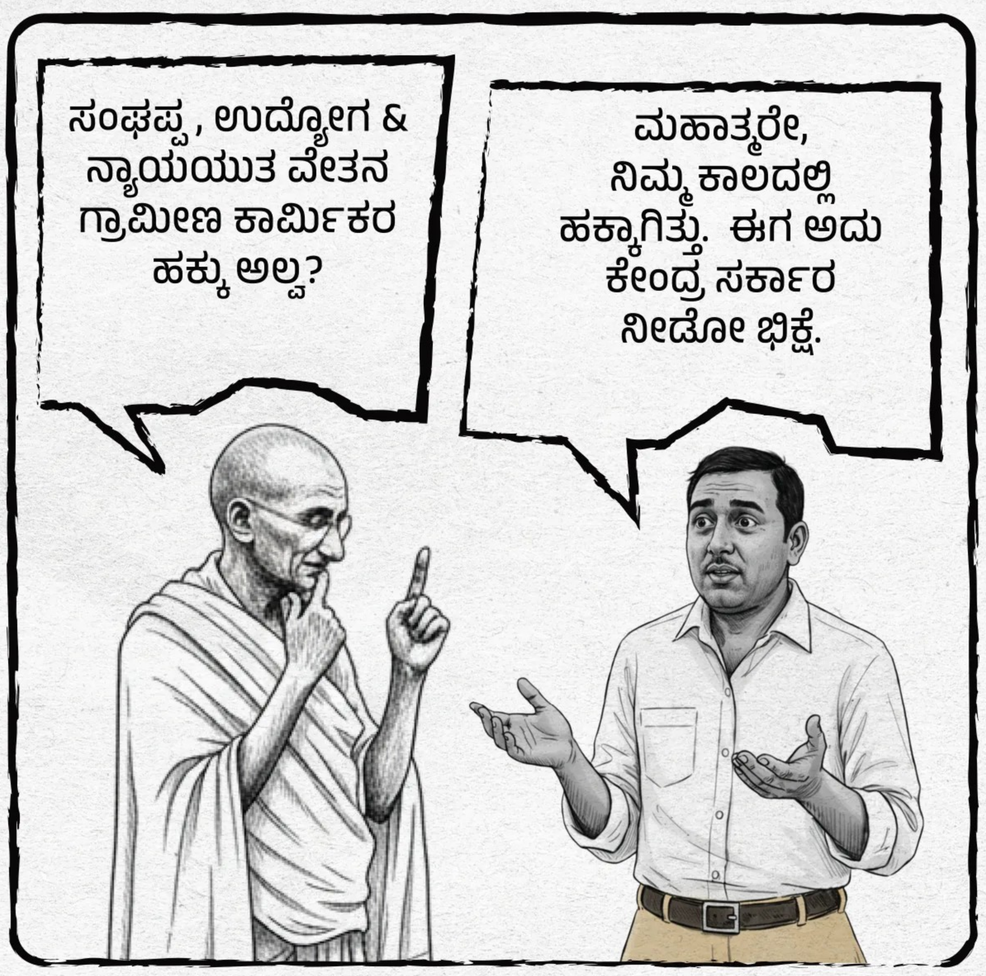
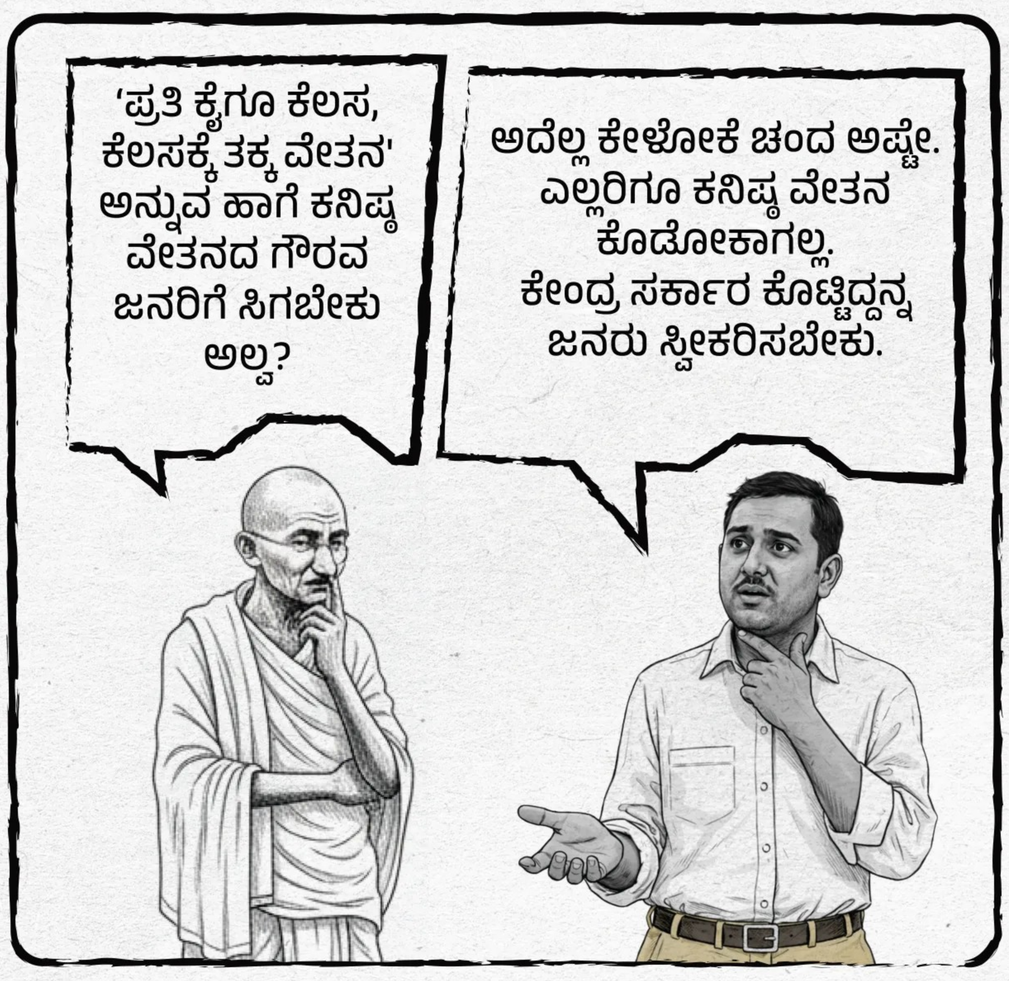
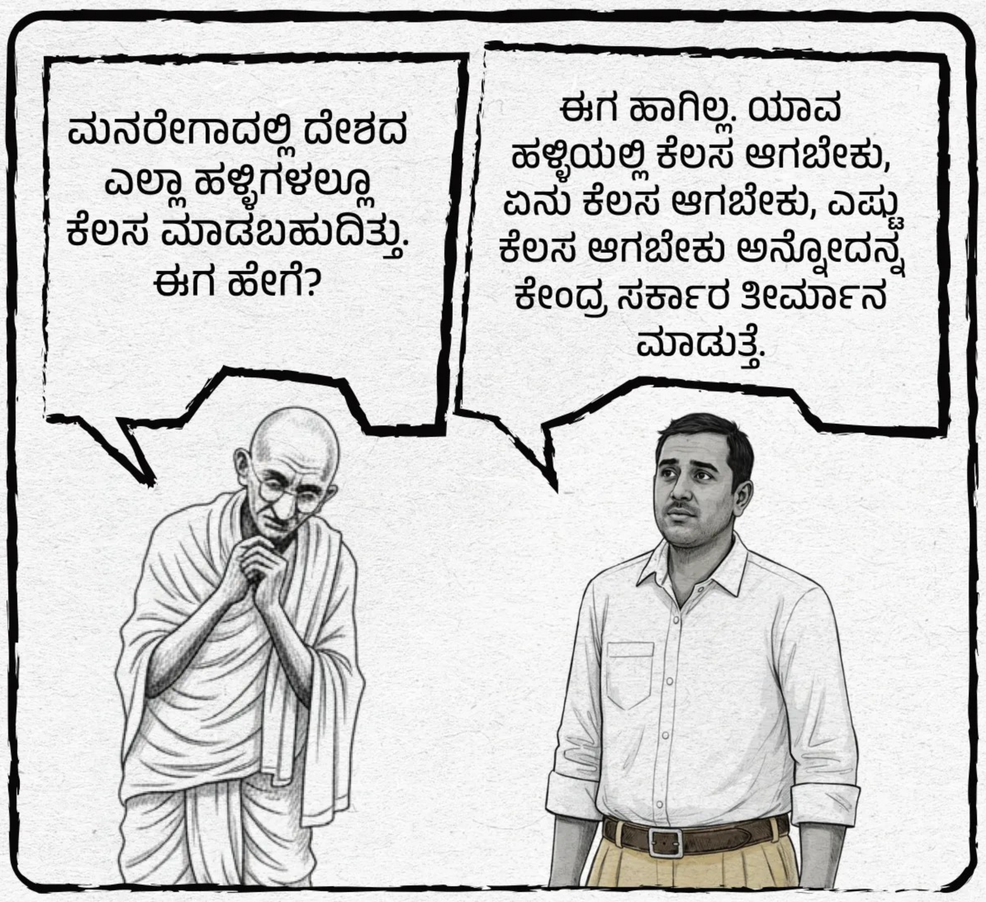
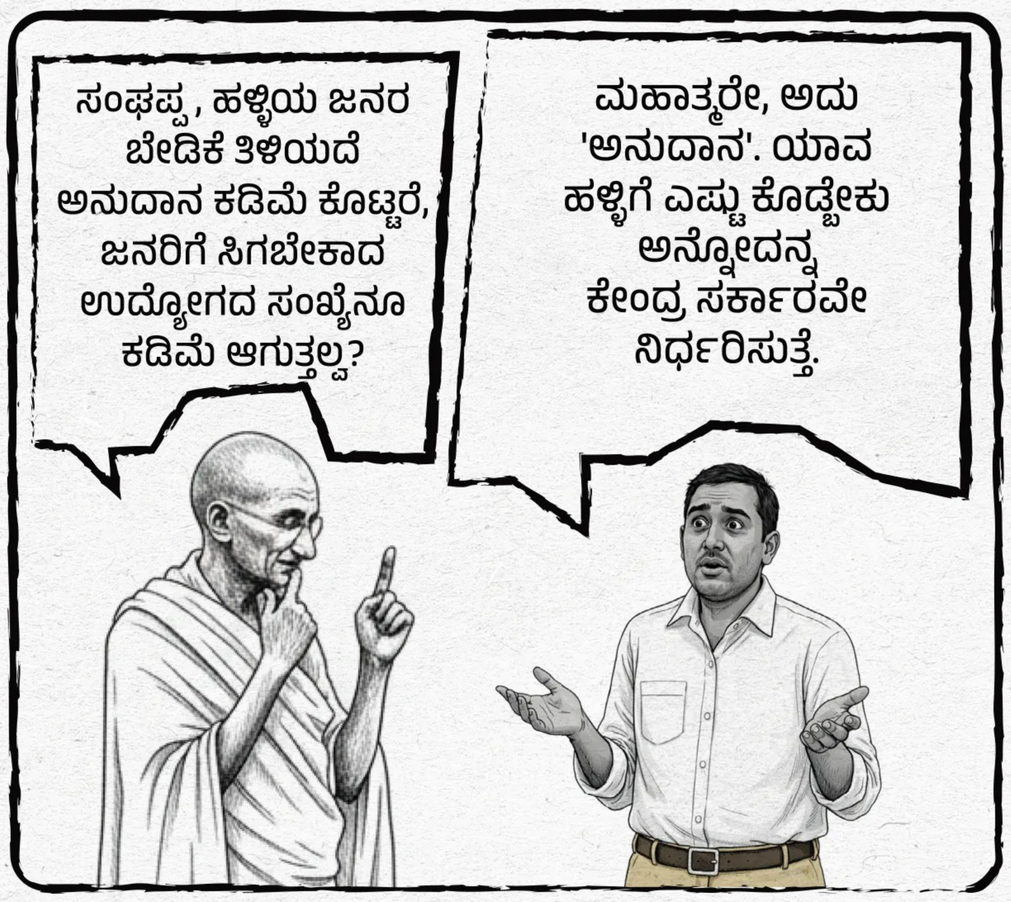
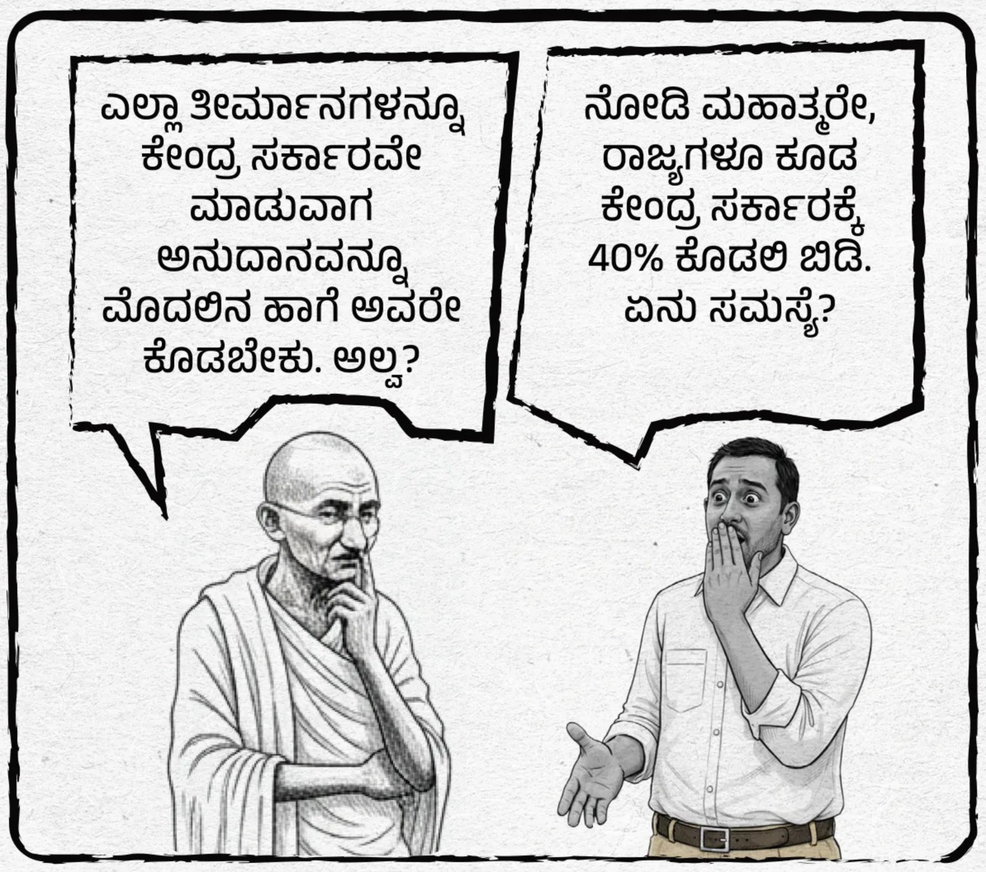
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ




'ಪ್ರತಿ ಕೈಗೂ ಕೆಲಸ, ಕೆಲಸಕ್ಕೆ ತಕ್ಕ ವೇತನ' ಅನ್ನುವ ಹಾಗೆ ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ವೇತನದ ಗೌರವ ಜನರಿಗೆ ಸಿಗಬೇಕು ಅಲ್ವ?
ಅದೆಲ್ಲ ಕೇಳೋಕೆ ಚಂದ ಅಷ್ಟೇ. ಎಲ್ಲರಿಗೂ ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ವೇತನ ಕೊಡೋಕಾಗಲ್ಲ. ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಕೊಟ್ಟಿದ್ದನ್ನ ಜನರು ಸ್ವೀಕರಿಸಬೇಕು.




ಸಂಘಪ್ಪ , ಹಳ್ಳಿಯ ಜನರ ಬೇಡಿಕೆ ತಿಳಿಯದೆ ಅನುದಾನ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಕೊಟ್ಟರೆ, ಜನರಿಗೆ ಸಿಗಬೇಕಾದ ಉದ್ಯೋಗದ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆನೂ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಆಗುತ್ತಲ್ವ?
ಮಹಾತ್ಮರೇ, ಅದು 'ಅನುದಾನ'. ಯಾವ ಹಳ್ಳಿಗೆ ಎಷ್ಟು ಕೊಡ್ಬೇಕು ಅನ್ನೋದನ್ನ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸರ್ಕಾರವೇ ನಿರ್ಧರಿಸುತ್ತೆ.



ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಜಾರಿಗೆ ತಂದಿರುವ ವಿಬಿ-ಗ್ರಾಮ್ ಜಿ
ಗ್ರಾಮ ಪಂಚಾಯತಿಗಳ ಅಧಿಕಾರ ಹಾಗೂ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಖಾತ್ರಿಗೆ ಮರಣ ಶಾಸನ!

ಮನರೇಗಾ ಪುನರ್ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದ ಮೇಲಿನ ತೆರಿಗೆ ಭಯೋತ್ಪಾದನೆ, ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಜನರ ಜೀವನೋಪಾಯ ಮತ್ತು ಪಂಚಾಯತಿಗಳ ಅಧಿಕಾರ ಕಸಿಯುವ ಕುತಂತ್ರ ನಿಲ್ಲುವವರೆಗೂ
#ಗ್ರಾಮಸಂಗ್ರಾಮನಿರಂತರ!

ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ: ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣಾಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಮತ್ತು ಪಂಚಾಯತ್ ರಾಜ್ ಇಲಾಖೆ

QUICK READ

Two accused surrender in rowdy-sheeter Auto Naga murder case

Bengaluru

Two key accused in the murder of rowdy-sheeter Auto Naga have surrendered before the Madanayakanahalli police, officials said. Abhi of Byregowdanahalli and Chetan alias Chethu of Hanumanthapur presented themselves at the police station around 4 am on Wednesday, three days after the incident at Balaji Sarovar Farmhouse near Nagarur. Earlier, another accused, Pawan, had surrendered on the day of the murder. Police said efforts are on to trace the remaining accused, Umesh and Kiran, who are currently absconding.

Young man injured after being hit by lorry in Rajajinagar

Bengaluru

A young man was seriously injured after a lorry loaded with iron overturned and fell on him in Rajajinagar. The incident occurred near the ESI Hospital when the victim, identified as Bambam, a native of Bihar, was travelling along the roadside. His leg got trapped under the overturned vehicle, leaving him in severe pain. Local residents and police rushed to the spot and made repeated efforts to free him. A crane was later brought in to lift the lorry, and rescue operations were underway at the time of reporting.

IISc study reveals how Staphylococcus toxin pierces human cell membranes

Researchers capture real-time assembly of deadly bacterial toxin on human cell membranes

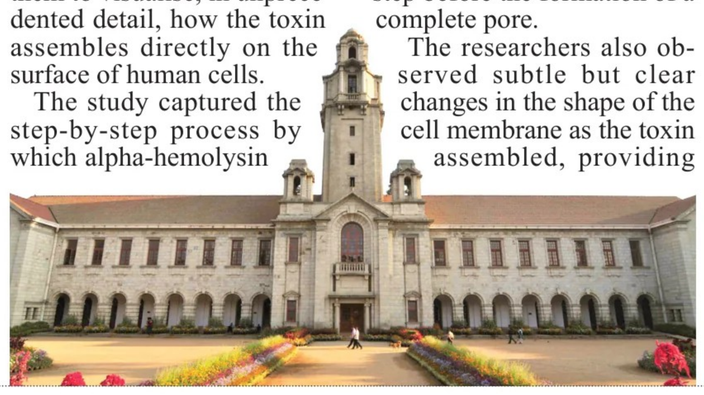
BENGALURU

Scientists at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have uncovered crucial details about how Staphylococcus aureus, a common yet potentially deadly bacterium, damages human cells. The findings are particularly significant as infections caused by S. aureus are becoming increasingly difficult to treat due to rising antibiotic resistance and the absence of an approved vaccine.

S. aureus is responsible for a wide spectrum of illnesses, ranging from mild skin infections to severe and sometimes fatal conditions such as pneumonia, bloodstream infections and sepsis. One of the bacterium's most potent weapons is alpha-hemolysin, a toxin that attacks host cells by punching holes, or pores, in their membranes, ultimately leading to cell death.

Although alpha-hemolysin has been studied for decades, most earlier research relied on artificial systems such as detergents or simplified lipid membranes. These environments do not accurately reflect the complexity of real human cell membranes. To bridge this gap, the IISc team, led by Somnath Dutta from the Molecular Biophysics Unit, set out to observe how the toxin behaves in a more realistic biological setting.

In the new study, the researchers used a combination of advanced techniques including fluorescence microscopy, electron microscopy, cryo-electron microscopy and mutation-based analysis to examine the interaction between alpha-hemolysin and red blood cells. This multi-pronged approach allowed them to visualise, in unprecedented detail, how the toxin assembles directly on the surface of human cells.



The study captured the step-by-step process by which alpha-hemolysin transitions from a soluble, harmless form into a destructive pore-forming structure. Importantly, the team identified several intermediate stages in this transformation. Among these was an arc-shaped assembly of the toxin, which appears to be a critical step before the formation of a complete pore.

The researchers also observed subtle but clear changes in the shape of the cell membrane as the toxin assembled, providing visual evidence of how membrane damage begins. According to IISc, these observations offer valuable insight into the early events that lead to cell injury and death.

Understanding these intermediate stages is crucial, the researchers said, because they represent potential targets for medical intervention. Drugs or antibodies designed to block the toxin at these stages could prevent pore formation altogether. The findings therefore open new avenues for the development of anti-virulence therapies or vaccines aimed at neutralising alpha-hemolysin, offering hope in the fight against increasingly drug-resistant S. aureus infections.

Writer Usha Devi passes away

BENGALURU

Eminent writer Usha Devi (86), popularly known by her pen name Kulasekhari, passed away following age-related health issues. She is survived by two daughters and a son. A founding member of the Karnataka Writers' Association, Usha Devi remained closely associated with the body for 47 years and played a key role in nurturing literary activity in the State. A prolific author, her notable works include poetry collections Kshithija, Sankalpa, Bikkugalu, Shataranja and Ekala. Her other writings span genres such as the novel There Is Only One Life, the play Mangala Mangalya, the biography The Memory of a Dying Girl and the autobiography I Am Nothing and Not Like Everyone Else.

Karanth Layout sites carved from graveyard? BDA denies allegations

BENGALURU

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has found itself at the centre of a controversy after social media posts alleged that residential sites in the sprawling Shivaram Karanth Layout were carved out of what appeared to be a graveyard. The civic body has strongly denied the claims, calling them "impossible" and legally untenable.

The controversy erupted after photographs shared on X by user Sunil Reddy went viral, sparking widespread reactions and sarcastic commentary from netizens. One user quipped that the sites appeared to be "pre-booked by spirits," while another remarked that it could be the "most peaceful layout in the city." The images, reportedly taken in Sector 1 of Shivaram Karanth Layout and tagged to BDA Commissioner P. Manivannan, showed site numbers marked close to what looked like burial spots.

Sector 1, located near an engineering college at Ramagondanahalli along the Yelahanka–Doddaballapur Road, has witnessed visible development in recent months. Roads have been laid, a lake has been developed, and yellow boards indicating site numbers have been installed along pavements, suggesting the area is being readied for allotment.

Citizens blame BDA for failing to protect allottees by acquiring land unfit for housing

The timing of the allegations is significant. BDA is preparing for its first major site allotment since Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout in 2016. More than 5,000 sites in Phase I of Shivaram Karanth Layout were slated for allotment in January 2024, although around 7,000–8,000 sites remain tied up in litigation filed by land losers. As preparatory work progressed, prospective buyers began visiting the layout to assess what could soon become their future neighbourhoods. It was during one such visit that a prospective allottee reportedly stumbled upon the site that triggered the controversy.

Responding to the allegations, Commissioner Manivannan dismissed them outright. "Nobody can acquire a graveyard. This is not a graveyard," he said, adding that it was possible a farmer who previously owned the land may have buried a deceased person there. He also pointed out that the Supreme Court has clearly ruled that graveyards and cremation grounds cannot be acquired by any agency.

Another senior BDA official questioned the authenticity of the viral images, saying the authority was examining whether the photographs were genuine or possibly AI-generated. "We are trying to ascertain the veracity of these images," the official said.

While BDA has maintained that the possibility of sites being carved out of a graveyard is "zero," citizens have blamed the authority for failing to safeguard the interests of site allottees by allegedly acquiring land unsuitable for residential purposes. Even as officials insist there is no wrongdoing, the episode has added an eerie and embarrassing twist to one of Bengaluru's most closely watched housing projects.

Milk booth owner attacked by rowdy for objecting to public nuisance

BENGALURU

A 42-year-old milk booth owner was allegedly attacked with a knife by a rowdy-sheeter and his associates after he objected to them creating a public nuisance in Avalahalli on Mysuru Road. The main accused, Seena alias Havali Seena (24), a resident of Avalahalli, has been arrested by Byatarayanapura police.

The injured man, identified as M.C. Vinay, is also a resident of the area. According to the complaint, Vinay had called a friend, also named Vinay, to join him for a post-dinner walk. Around 9 pm, the two were walking towards the 36 'D' BMTC bus stand in Muneshwara Block, Avalahalli, when they noticed Seena and two associates shouting loudly and causing a disturbance.

The complainant confronted the group and asked them to leave the spot. Shortly thereafter, Vinay received a call from his wife asking him to return home. At that moment, Seena and his associates allegedly pushed him, causing his mobile phone to fall to the ground. When Vinay turned back, Seena reportedly abused him in filthy language, dared him to object again and threatened to kill him.

As Vinay bent down to pick up his phone, Seena allegedly attacked him with a knife, striking him on the right side and front of his head. When Vinay's friend tried to intervene, he was also assaulted. Hearing their cries, local residents rushed to the scene, forcing the assailants to flee.

Police said Seena is a rowdy-sheeter with multiple cases registered against him at Hanumanthanagar, Girinagar and Byatarayanapura police stations. Further investigation is underway.

BENGALURU WALKATHON LAUNCH

Dr G Mahantesh, Founder and Managing Trustee of Samarthanam Trust for Disabled, Manoj Nagpal, Managing Director of VP Professional Services, and other dignitaries at the press conference for the Bengaluru Walkathon "Health for All" held at Press Club, Bengaluru, on Wednesday ▸ CH PHOTO

HC quashes narcotics Act case against techie

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has quashed criminal proceedings under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act against a Bengaluru-based techie, holding that the case was initiated solely on the confession statement of a co-accused and that allowing it to continue would amount to an abuse of the process of law.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna passed the order while allowing a petition filed by Junaid Hussain Haveri, a native of Hubballi who works in Bengaluru. The case arose from a June 20, 2023 operation by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), during which officers intercepted a Speed Post parcel suspected to contain narcotics. The parcel, sent from Coimbatore and addressed to Junaid at Marathahalli Colony, allegedly contained silver foil with 50 blot papers bearing printed patterns, believed to be LSD.

The NCB conducted a controlled delivery by replacing the original contents with a dummy parcel. Junaid's former roommate, Abhay Kumar, received the parcel and signed for it. In his statement, Abhay claimed that Junaid had asked him to accept the parcel and hand it over later. Based on this statement, Junaid was summoned under Section 67(2) of the NDPS Act.

Junaid contended that he had no knowledge of the parcel's contents and had merely requested Abhay to receive it. He argued that there was no evidence showing that he had either received the parcel or transferred any money linked to the alleged offence. He also pointed out that mandatory procedures under Sections 50-A and 2(vii)(b) of the Act, governing controlled deliveries, were not followed. The High Court had already quashed proceedings against Abhay in January last year due to procedural violations.

Bommai Condoles the Death of Maharashtra DCM Ajit Pawar

BENGALURU

Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai has expressed deep sorrow over the tragic and untimely death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash. Describing the incident as extremely painful, Bommai said the news had left him deeply shocked and saddened.

In a post on social media platform X, Bommai noted that Ajit Pawar had carved out a distinct identity for himself in Maharashtra politics through decades of public service. He said Pawar played a crucial role in the state's political landscape and development, particularly after aligning with the BJP and supporting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development-oriented governance.

Bommai added that Pawar's demise was not only a great loss to Maharashtra politics but also to the National Democratic Alliance. He extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members, colleagues and admirers, and prayed that God grant them the strength to endure the immense loss. He also prayed for the departed leader's soul to rest in eternal peace.

WEEKLY POLICE REVIEW

City Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh with senior officers during a property parade and weekly review meeting at the Commissioner's Office in Bengaluru on Wednesday ▸ CH PHOTO

ANOTHER EXPRESSWAY

Faster B'luru–Vijayawada link planned via 10-lane NH-44

BENGALURU

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is set to further strengthen Bengaluru's regional connectivity by planning a faster road link between the city and Vijayawada through a major upgrade of National Highway-44. After connecting the eastern parts of Bengaluru with the Bengaluru–Chennai Expressway at Hoskote, NHAI is now preparing a Detailed Project Report (DPR) to link the northern parts of the city with the proposed Vijayawada expressway.

As part of the plan, the existing Bengaluru–Hyderabad NH-44 will be widened into a 10-lane highway over a 90-km stretch. This section will feature a six-lane main carriageway running from Devanahalli in Karnataka to Kodikonda in Andhra Pradesh. From Kodikonda, the road will seamlessly merge with the greenfield stretch of the Bengaluru–Kadapa–Vijayawada expressway, passing through Kadapa before heading towards Vijayawada.

The greenfield portion of the expressway, being developed by NHAI, will span 342 km between Kodikonda and Muppavaram in Andhra Pradesh. In addition, brownfield upgrades will be undertaken on existing stretches, including the Bengaluru–Kodikonda section of NH-44 and the Addanki–Vijayawada stretch on NH-16.

According to a senior NHAI official, the Bengaluru–Kadapa–Vijayawada expressway is expected to significantly cut travel time between the two cities from the current 11–12 hours to around six to seven hours. "Upgrading NH-44 for a length of 90 km from Devanahalli to Kodikonda is a key component of this expressway project," the official said. The expansion will pass through Devanahalli and Chikkaballapura districts before crossing into Andhra Pradesh.

The draft DPR for the project is expected by February, and road widening will begin from the Bengaluru end, near Kannamangala Gate close to Devanahalli. Most of the land required for the 10-lane expansion is already in NHAI's possession, except at three locations where new railway overbridges will be required.

In parallel, NHAI is also implementing safety measures along the busy Bengaluru–Hyderabad highway. Considering heavy traffic volumes and a rise in road accidents, barriers and highway streetlights will be installed between the trumpet interchange and Devanahalli. Barriers measuring 1.5 metres will be placed along a 12.5-km stretch, while streetlights will cover around 12 km.

With rapid urbanisation in Devanahalli and expanding industrial activity, traffic between the STRR intersection and Hebbal has risen sharply. Median barriers beyond the trumpet interchange and improved lighting are expected to enhance safety and visibility, officials said.

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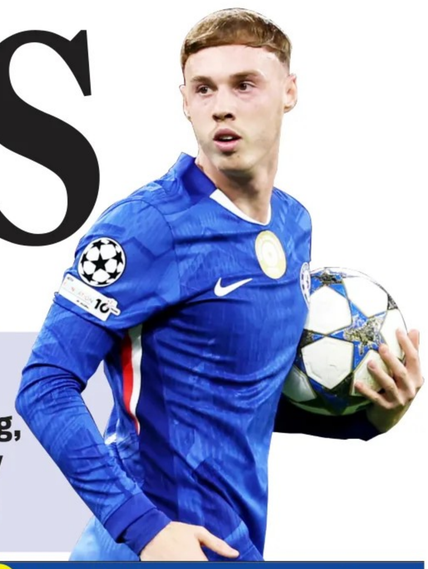
Govt committed to true social justice: Prez Murmu **P7**

Washington Senate officially honours India's R-Day **P9**

P10 Rosenior: Palmer staying, Chelsea deny United links



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'Comeback King' Ajit Pawar dies in air crash

'Pilot failed to sight runway, attempted go-around, then circled and landed with clearance; incident occurred; probe ordered with AAI assistance'

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and NCP chief Ajit Pawar died after his aircraft crashed during an emergency landing attempt at Baramati airport on Wednesday morning, leaving a void in the state's fractured political scenario and throwing his party into uncertainty.

Four others, including Pawar's personal security officer Vidip Jadhav, two pilots -- Sumit Kapur and Sambhavi Pathak -- and a flight attendant Pinky Mali, also died in the crash.

The small aircraft, which took off from Mumbai around 8.10 am, crashed near Baramati airport half an hour later. According to reports, Pawar was to attend four important public meetings ahead of the local body polls next month.

The leader (66) was the nephew of veteran politician and NCP founder Sharad Pawar, and the cousin of Lok Sabha member Supriya Sule. He is survived by wife Sunetra, and sons Parth and Jay.

"Five people on board the Mumbai to Baramati charter plane, which crash-landed, have died," the DGCA stated.

The aircraft, a Bombardier Learjet 45, crashed during its second landing approach on the table-top runway. The 16 years olda aicraft belonged to Delhi-based charter company VSR.

Funeral in Baramati today

Pune: The last rites of Ajit Pawar will be held with full State honours at Vidya Pratishthan in Baramati of Pune at 11 am on Thursday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah are expected to attend the funeral. The state government declared a public holiday on Wednesday and also announced a three-day period of state mourning.

The aircraft was reduced to ashes, with visuals showing it completely shattered and debris scattered all around. Initial visuals showed a massive blaze and smoke billowing from the spot. Such was the impact of the crash that the body of the NCP leader was identified through his watch and clothes.

The visibility at Baramati airport was poor when the aircraft carrying Ajit Pawar crashed, said Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu.

It is perhaps a twist of fate that Ajit Pawar, who was born in Baramati and built his career from the constituency, died in Baramati, where he was scheduled to address four public meetings ahead of the ZP polls.

'No conspiracy, purely an accident'

Mumbai: It was purely an accident, said an emotional Sharad Pawar, ruling out any conspiracy in the plane crash that killed his nephew Ajit Pawar on Wednesday morning. "There's no conspiracy involved; it's purely an accident. Maharashtra has suffered a huge loss with the passing of Ajit Pawar. A capable leader has left us today. Maharashtra has lost a great personality today. This loss can never be compensated," Sharad Pawar, Ajit's uncle, said in his first comments on the tragedy.

'Dada' who never made it to CM's chair

MUMBAI

The passing of Ajit Anantrao Pawar, one of Maharashtra's most influential yet controversial yet controversial political figures, marks the end of a long and tumultuous political career that spanned over three decades.

The nephew of Sharad Pawar, a towering figure in Indian politics and founder of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), he spent almost all his political life under his uncle's shadow. Ajit Pawar cut his teeth in politics in cooperative movements — a defining feature of Maratha politics. His father, Anantrao Pawar, died when Ajit was just 18, prompting him to shoulder responsibilities at a young age.

In 1991, he was elected chairman of the Pune District Cooperative Bank, a post he held for 16 years, further solidifying his base in cooperative politics. That same year, he entered electoral politics by winning a seat in the Lok Sabha from Baramati, one of Maharashtra's key constituencies — a seat he would retain in various capacities for decades.

Soon, he became an MLA from Baramati, a stronghold he would represent uninterruptedly, winning with significant margins.

Over his career, Pawar served as Deputy CM under multiple administrations and chief ministers, including Prithviraj Chavan, Devendra Fadnavis, Uddhav Thackeray, and, most recently, under the Eknath Shinde–Devendra Fadnavis government formed in December 2024.

Ajit became deputy CM more times and more continuously than any of his predecessors.

His portfolios throughout his political life spanned critical areas such as irrigation, spanned critical areas such as irrigation, agriculture, water resources, rural development, finance, , and planning — reflecting his sustained engagement with economic and infrastructural policy in in Maharashtra.

However, his politics has always been entrenched in controversies. Opposition leaders, mainly the BJP, alleged that Ajit Pawar was involved in a ₹70,000-crore irrigation scam.

Known popularly as "Dada" among supporters, Ajit has sought to build his his legacy outside his uncle's shadow. He nearly did that when he engineered a coup d'état to break the National Congress Party, founded by Sharad Pawar on July 2, 2023, and aligned with the NDA. That gave him some respite from the corruption allegation. However, he never became the 'saheb'of the masses as his uncle is.

Ajit Pawar's record as Deputy CM of Maharashtra

Order	Post	Tenure	Government/Coalition
1	Deputy CM	11 November 2010–25 September 2012	Congress–NCP
2	Deputy CM	7 December 2012–28 September 2014	Congress–NCP
3	Deputy CM	November 23, 2019–November 26, 2019	Devendra Fadnavis Government (3 days)
4	Deputy CM	December 30, 2019 - June 29, 2022	Uddhav Thackeray (MVA) Government
5	Deputy CM	July 2, 2023 – Present	Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis government

ವಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ಸಂಪರ್ಕ ಇಲಾಖೆ
Dept. of Information & Public Relations
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಚಲನಚಿತ್ರ ಅಕಾಡೆಮಿ
Karnataka Chalanachitra Academy
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಚಲನಚಿತ್ರ ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯ ಮಂಡಳ
FIAPF ACCREDITED FESTIVAL

Welcome to the 17th
Bengaluru International Film Festival

Inauguration by
Shri Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Govt. of Karnataka

In the august presence of
Shri D K Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Govt. of Karnataka

January | 29 | Thursday
5:00 PM at the Grand steps of Vidhana Soudha

Inaugural Film
Porte Bagage (Dutch, Netherlands)
Director: Abdelkarim El-Fassi | Time: 8:00 PM | Venue: Vidhana Soudha

BIFFes - 2026 showcases the best of world and Indian cinema, bringing together award-winning films, emerging voices and powerful narratives from across continents.

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The World in Bengaluru

Theme 2026
WOMAN AS SHE IS...
Shared Sensibilities,
A Collective Voice for Equality

29 January – 6 February 2026 | Bengaluru
For Schedule & Updates visit: www.biffes.org

"To protect and respect our vibrant culture and tradition," is a Fundamental Duty of every citizen. This is affirmed by our Constitution.

CMofKarnataka | https://dipr.karnataka.gov.in/ | karnataka information

FOOTPATHS FREED AT LAST!

Pics by Hampa Nagaraju

Mysuru Cops Clear Pushcart Menace on JLB Road

SHYAM SUNDAR VATTAM
MYSURU

After months of chaos, congestion and complaints, the Mysuru city police finally swung into action on Wednesday, clearing scores of fruit and vegetable vendors who had encroached upon the footpaths of the busy Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Road. For residents and daily commuters, it was nothing short of a long-awaited relief.

The nearly 600-metre stretch of footpath, extending from Nanjumalige Circle near Seth Mohan Das Tulasi Das Hospital to Chamundi Puram, had virtually vanished under a sea of pushcarts. Vendors had occupied every inch of the footpath, forcing pedestrians to risk their lives by walking on the main carriageway. Even bus shelters and Trin-Trin cycle pick-up points were shamelessly converted into makeshift vegetable storage yards.

Nanjumalige Circle had become a daily nightmare. Buyers parked their two-wheelers and cars right on the road, choking traffic and bringing movement to a grinding halt during peak hours. Pushcart vendors freely conducted business in and around the circle, completely oblivious to the traffic snarls they were creating.

Adding to the mess were stray cattle, which had made the footpaths their permanent feeding grounds, thriving on leftover and rotten fruits and vegetables. What was meant to be a pedestrian-friendly zone had turned into an unsafe, unhygienic stretch.

"Crossing Nanjumalige Circle had become a test of patience and survival. Footpaths were no longer meant for humans," said a frustrated resident.

Media Pressure, Public Anger, Political Push

The issue did not go unnoticed. The local media relentlessly highlighted the growing menace of footpath encroachments. Even Mysuru–Kodagu Lok Sabha MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar stepped in, demanding the creation of exclusive vending zones to protect both vendors' livelihoods and citizens' right to safe walkways.

Meanwhile, food joints too mushroomed on footpaths, with tables and chairs sprawled across public space in the name of "outdoor catering," further shrinking walking space.

"Mysuru was once known for its wide, walkable footpaths. Sadly, it had turned into a street-vendor city," remarked a senior citizen.

Ironically, the police had recently installed automatic traffic signal lights at Nanjumalige Circle, but they remained unused — simply because vendors blocked free vehicular movement. With the eviction drive now completed, the signals are finally expected to become operational. "What's the use of smart signals when the roads themselves are blocked?" asked a commuter.

With the encroachments cleared, residents can finally walk on footpaths without the fear of being knocked down by speeding vehicles. Traffic flow has visibly improved, and the circle looks closer to its original design. "This should not be a one-day action. Footpaths belong to pedestrians, not pushcarts," demanded a local shopkeeper.

The eviction drive is being seen as a much-needed first step toward reclaiming Mysuru's lost pedestrian culture. Citizens now hope the authorities will follow it up with permanent vendor zones, strict enforcement, and regular monitoring — so that Mysuru remains the City of Palaces, not Pushcarts.

Mysuru Pays Glowing Tribute to Field Marshal K.M. Cariappa

MYSURU

The City of Mytsuru resonated with pride and patriotism as the 127th birth anniversary of Field Marshal Kodandera Madappa Cariappa, India's first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, was solemnly and proudly observed on Wednesday.

The city came together to honour the legendary soldier whose life remains a shining symbol of discipline, courage and unwavering devotion to the nation.

At the heart of the celebrations stood the statue of Field Marshal Cariappa at the busy Metropole Circle, which was garlanded by representatives of various organisations, ex-servicemen, and citizens from all walks of life. Floral tributes, salutes and moments of quiet reflection marked the occasion, transforming the venue into a space filled with reverence and national pride.

SALUTING A SOLDIER SUPREME

A Hero Remembered by Soldiers and Citizens Alike

Ex-servicemen, many of them in uniform, paid homage to the Field Marshal who laid the foundations of a professional, apolitical and disciplined Indian Army after Independence. Veterans recalled Cariappa's firm belief that the Army must remain above politics and serve only the Constitution and the people of India.

"Field Marshal Cariappa was not just a military leader; he was a nation-builder in uniform," said a retired Army officer during the ceremony.

Citizens, students and youth organisations also participated, reflecting how Cariappa's legacy continues to inspire generations far beyond the barracks and battlefields.

Kodagu's Proud Son, India's Timeless Icon

Born in Kodagu, a land renowned for its martial traditions, Field Marshal Cariappa is revered as the proud son of a region that has given an extraordinary number of soldiers to the Indian Armed Forces. Kodagu holds the rare distinction of producing military leaders, brave soldiers and decorated officers whose service has safeguarded the nation's borders for decades.

"Kodagu lives and breathes patriotism, and Cariappa embodied that spirit in its purest form," remarked a senior citizen. Field Marshal Cariappa's leadership during the formative years of independent India, his role in shaping military ethics, and his lifelong commitment to national unity were recalled during the programme. Speakers stressed that his values of integrity, discipline and sacrifice are more relevant than ever in today's times.

As the tricolour fluttered and wreaths adorned his statue, Mysuru sent out a clear message — the nation never forgets those who dedicate their lives to its defence. The memory of Field Marshal K.M. Cariappa continues to march forward, inspiring India to stand tall, united and strong.

1001 Steps of Protest for a Sacred Hill

MYSURU

Another group of concerned citizens has announced a "Chamundi Hill Chalo" on February 1, raising a strong voice against what they describe as the reckless destruction of the sacred Chamundi Hill in the name of the PRASAD scheme. The symbolic protest will see participants climbing the historic 1001 steps from the foothills to the hilltop, sending a powerful message that devotion cannot come at the cost of destruction.

Former journalists, retired bureaucrats, historians, environmentalists and citizens from all walks of life have joined hands to protect the serene hill from being reduced to a concrete jungle. For them, Chamundi Hill is not merely a tourist destination, but a living symbol of Mysuru's cultural, ecological and spiritual heritage.

This protest marks the third such initiative under a growing umbrella of organisations seeking to draw the attention of the state government. The activists allege that under the pretext of providing amenities to devotees, the government has planned multiple projects atop the hill without adequately considering environmental consequences.

"Development should respect the hill, not erase it," said a senior activist involved in the movement.

A Hill Already Wounded

The protesters point out that the damage has already begun. The hilltop, once tranquil and green, has been scarred by the construction of parking lots, shops, offices and numerous houses. What was once a calm spiritual retreat is now witnessing relentless urban pressure.

Environmental organisations fear that continued construction will destabilise the fragile ecosystem of the hill and pose a serious threat to the Sri Chamundeshwari Temple, a revered shrine that has stood for centuries.

Once envisioned as a programme to enhance pilgrimage experience, the PRASAD scheme has now become a bane for Chamundi Hill, activists allege. They warn that senseless projects in the name of development could permanently alter the hill's natural contours and spiritual sanctity. "Devotion does not demand destruction. The hill itself is sacred," remarked a retired bureaucrat.

The February 1 march is intended as a peaceful yet firm appeal to the government to halt further construction and adopt sustainable, eco-sensitive alternatives. As citizens prepare to climb the 1001 steps, their message is clear — Chamundi Hill must be preserved for future generations, not buried under concrete today.

Direct Walk-in Interview for Recruitment of Contract-Based Medical Officers

MYSURU

Applications are invited for a direct walk-in interview to fill vacant posts of Specialist Medical Officers, Emergency Medical Officers, and General Duty Medical Officers on a contract basis (roster-cum-merit basis) in public hospitals / Community Health Centres / Primary Health Centres of Mysuru district.

Eligible candidates should attend the walk-in interview on February 3 at 10.30 a.m. at the office of the District Health and Family Welfare Officer, Nazarbad. Interested candidates may appear for the interview along with all applicable original documents for verification.

Vacancies

General Duty Medical Officers – 03
Emergency Medical Officers – 07
Senior Medical Officers – 02, according to a press release issued by the District Health and Family Welfare Officer.

Sadbhavana Walk to Mark Martyrs' Day in Mysuru on Jan 30 for Peace and Communal Harmony

MYSURU

Amid growing concerns over rising social divisions and intolerance, a Sadbhavana (Harmony) Walk will be organised in Mysuru on January 30, Martyrs' Day, with an appeal to citizens to reaffirm their commitment to peace, unity and communal harmony. The programme was announced at a press conference held here on Wednesday. Addressing the media, the organisers said peace and harmony form the very foundation of progress in any society, particularly in a diverse country like India that is home to multiple religions, castes, sects and languages. They stressed that nurturing a collective conscience that transcends divisions of caste and religion is not merely desirable but an unavoidable necessity of social life.

Expressing concern over the present situation, the speakers said it was painful to witness the erosion of the emotional unity and solidarity— "We are Indians"—that was forged during India's long freedom struggle. Even after more than seven decades of independence, they said, the current trajectory of the nation raises serious questions, as divisive and destructive forces are increasingly disrupting social peace in the name of caste and religion. While ordinary citizens continue to grapple with basic issues such as hunger, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, certain elements are allegedly making it their daily agenda to weaken unity and social cohesion. The organisers pointed out that words of violence, the spread of hatred and unchecked religious fanaticism were posing a grave threat to the country's social fabric. In this critical context, they said, the observance of Martyrs' Day on January 30 assumes special significance. Recalling the sacrifice of Mahatma Gandhi, who laid down his life for national unity and communal harmony, they emphasised that India must not once again fall victim to divisive tendencies.

Invoking the vision of Rashtrakavi Kuvempu, the organisers reiterated the responsibility of upholding Karnataka and the nation as a "garden of peace for all humanity." They called upon citizens to come together on January 30 with a renewed message of harmony and mutual respect.

'YUVARAJ' OF MYSURU ZOO PASSES AWAY

MYSURU

Chamarajendra Zoological Gardens, Mysuru, has announced the death of its major attraction, the male giraffe "Yuvaraj," aged about 25 years, due to old age. Yuvaraj passed away on Wednesday at around 10.30 am.

Yuvaraj was born on December 7, 2001, as the ninth offspring of giraffes Henry and Honey, who were brought from Germany in 1987. From birth, Yuvaraj was raised under the dedicated care of animal keepers and went on to become the longest-living giraffe at the Mysuru Zoo, having lived for 25 years.

Among the giraffes born to Honey and Henry — Krishnaraj, Chamaraj, Narasimharaj, and Yuvaraj — Yuvaraj was the only one to have survived to this age. His death is an irreparable loss to the zoo, and Chamarajendra Zoological Gardens has expressed its profound condolences over the passing of the beloved animal.

The Mysuru Zoo noted that Yuvaraj held a special place in the hearts of visitors and staff alike and remained one of the zoo's most cherished residents for decades.

EPS-95 Pensioners of Vikrant Tyres Seek Minimum ₹9,000 Pension

MYSURU

Members of the Vikrant Tyres Retired Employees Welfare Association along with beneficiaries of the Employees' Pension Scheme-1995 (EPS-95) have once again urged the Central Government to fix a minimum pension that would enable retired employees to lead a dignified life. They alleged that despite repeated representations, their long-pending demands have gone unaddressed, pushing lakhs of pensioners into severe financial distress.

They staged a protest in Mysuru on Wednesday in support of their demands. According to the association, nearly 8 to 10 lakh EPS-95 pensioners across the country have reportedly died over the years due to health complications aggravated by lack of funds for medicines and medical care. Their families, they said, are struggling to survive without any meaningful social security support.

At present, EPS-95 pensioners receive a monthly pension ranging from a meagre ₹500 to ₹2,500. When calculated on a daily basis, this works out to barely ₹25 to ₹60 per day, which, pensioners point out, is insufficient even to buy a litre of milk, let alone meet essential living and healthcare expenses.

Explaining the structure of the EPS-95 scheme, the association said that employees contribute 12 per cent of their basic salary towards Provident

Fund (PF), with employers making an equal contribution. Out of the employer's 12 per cent share, 8.33 per cent is diverted to the Employees' Pension Fund. However, till May 31, 2001, this contribution was calculated on an assumed basic pay of ₹5,000, amounting to just ₹471 per month towards pension. From June 1, 2001 to September 1, 2014, the assumed basic pay was revised only to ₹6,500, which, pensioners argue, has severely limited their pension benefits despite years of service.

The EPS-95 pensioners have placed four key demands before the government: fixing a minimum pension of ₹9,000 per month, linking Dearness Allowance (DA) to the minimum EPS pension, extending ESI or free medical benefits to EPS pensioners, and granting 100 per cent pension to widows and widowers.

Meanwhile, the association also raised serious concerns over the non-implementation of the Supreme Court's order dated November 4, 2022, which directed that eligible pensioners be allowed higher pension based on actual basic salary. They alleged that the Provident Fund authorities are misleading pensioners by claiming that employees from factories with exempted trusts are not eligible for higher pension, contrary to the apex court's ruling.

Pensioners further alleged that they have been instructed to exercise the "Joint Option" by January 31, 2025, failing which they would lose eligibility for higher pension. The retired union of Vikrant Tyres said it has already submitted all required documents to the PF office through the management of JK Tyres, and officials have acknowledged that the documents are in order. Despite this, the issue remains unresolved, causing growing anxiety among retired employees

For what "valor" is the Congress undertaking a padyatra today?

MYSURU

State BJP Spokesperson M.G.Mahesh has said the Central Government has introduced a rural employment guarantee scheme called VB-GRAM-G and it has been revised and implemented as a programme that provides lifelong employment security to rural people. However, the Congress has strongly opposed this and has launched a padyatra against it.

In a press release here on Wednesday, he said If one understands the reason behind the Congress's opposition, it becomes clear that it is nothing but laughable. Everyone knows that this law, which was originally initiated with the intention of assuring employment to the people of this country, has undergone changes from time to time depending on circumstances. Initially it was "Coolie for Food", then it became NREGA, and later MGNREGA. The core objective has always been to prevent rural migration and to provide employment security to rural citizens. But under the Congress government in Karnataka, crores of rupees are being looted through MGNREGA.

To stop this looting, the Modi government has restructured (re-moduled) the scheme with a new approach and has framed the VB-Gram-G Act.

Mahesh said Congress is opposing this solely because this law will no longer give them the opportunity to indulge in corruption. As per the reports of the CAG and other agencies, corruption to the tune of more than ₹500 crore has taken place in Karnataka through the MGNREGA scheme. It is well known across the country that during Congress rule, corruption has been carried out using fake job cards. In Karnataka too, whenever a Congress government comes to power, this corruption has continued unabated. At a time when India is progressing and emerging as the fourth-largest economic power in the world, the Government of India is allocating nearly ₹1 lakh crore for this scheme.

With contributions from various states, this amount exceeds ₹1.5 lakh crore. With the noble objective that this investment should emerge as a national asset, the Central Government has introduced the VB-Gram-G Act.

The BJP leader said the Congress's real concern is that this law does not allow them to engage in corruption, and that is why they have taken to protests. This is truly laughable. Especially in Kalyana Karnataka, in Kalaburagi, it has been exposed that fake job cards were created by using bogus photographs of bus conductors, pasting men's photos on women's job cards and women's photos on men's job cards, and looting public money. For the family that has held political leadership in this region for several decades, the rules of the revised Act have become an indigestible morsel. That is precisely why Congress has come out onto the streets in protest. Due to the reform measures of the Modi government, the earnings of Congress leaders have reduced, and that is the reason they are opposing these measures.

Theme-based training held for loss-making Souhardha Cooperatives in Mysuru

MYSURU

A theme-based training programme was organised for the presidents and chief executive officers of loss-making Souharda cooperatives in Mysuru, Chamarajanagar and Mandya districts for the year 2024–25.

The programme was held at the Engineers' Auditorium on JLB Road, Mysuru, under the aegis of the Karnataka State Souharda Federation Limited.

Inaugurating the programme, H.V. Rajeev, former President of the Karnataka State Souharda Federation Limited and member of the Education Fund Advisory Committee, said that most cooperatives in this region are micro-level institutions.

He observed that while such cooperatives are often started with great enthusiasm, they usually begin operations with low capital and rush into providing loans and financial facilities, which leads to difficulties at an early stage.

He stressed the need to first increase the number of shareholders and mobilise deposits before expanding lending activities. Loan recovery, documentation, and periodic financial planning should be carried out with utmost care, he said. "While granting loans, due caution must be exercised. Proper verification of documents is essential. Only after strengthening share capital and increasing deposits should cooperatives move towards extending loan facilities," he advised.

Rajeev further emphasised that public service rendered by cooperatives must be qualitative in nature. Bringing institutions out of losses and steering them towards profitability is crucial.

Once cooperatives recover from losses, it becomes easier to fulfil the very objectives for which they were established.

He cautioned that presidents and chief executive officers must work with a strong sense of responsibility to ensure sustainable growth.

The programme was presided over by S.K. Manjunath, Director of the Karnataka State Souharda Federation Limited. Joint Director of Cooperative Audit S.M. Shashirekha, former Director of the Federation Bhaskar Hegde Kageri, Regional Officer of the Federation Guruprasad Bangera, and Souharda Development Officers R.S. Suresh and N. Balaram, among others, were present at the event.

" References to Human Values Are Found in Madhvacharya's Works"

MYSURU

On the occasion of Sri Madhva Navami, a special puja was performed after decorating the portrait of Sri Madhvacharya at the office located in Saraswathipuram, under the joint auspices of Vipra Mitra Balaga and the Akhila Bharatiya Brahmana Unified Parishat.

Speaking on the occasion, N. M. Naveen Kumar, President of the Akhila Bharatiya Brahmana Federation, said that Madhvacharya's messages are timeless guides. His treatises contain profound references to human values. "Madhvacharya is one of the foremost thinkers who raised the flag of the Madhva philosophy high," he said.

He further added that it is not enough to worship Madhvacharya on just one day. His principles and philosophies should be practiced in daily life. By undertaking activities rooted in knowledge along the path shown by him, one can make life meaningful. "The remembrance of Madhva, who gave the world the vision of Poorna Prajna, should happen every moment.,".

On this occasion, Bhoomika Suresh, Mysuru Anand, S. B. Vasudevamurthy, R. S. Satyanarayan, Ashwath Narayan, Jayashree Shivaram, Suchindra, Chakrapani, Vishwanath, Praveen Kumar, Satish, Srikanth, Murali, and several others were present.

Team Mysore remembers Field Marshal Cariappa and Lala Lajpat Ray

MYSURU

The Team Mysuru group observed the birth anniversaries of India's first Field Marshal, K.M. Cariappa, and freedom fighter Lala Lajpat Ray on Wednesday.

As part of the programme, members gathered at the Field Marshal Cariappa Circle, raised slogans in honour of the two great leaders, and paid floral tributes.

Ramakrishna, Director of the Mysuru Co-operative Bank, participated in the event as a guest. Members of Team Mysuru, including Gokul Govardhan, Hiriyanna, Anand, Ramaprasad, Yatheesh, Naveen, Ramesh, Raghavendra, Ravi, Narayan, Ravikumar, along with Smt. Uma, Shanthakka and young Nirvi, were present on the occasion.

MP Yaduveer inaugurates new Anganwadi Building in Hunsur

HUNSUR

Dharmapura village in Hunsur taluk, an Anganwadi building constructed at a cost of ₹13 lakh under the Joint Grant Scheme of the Women and Child Welfare Department for the year 2024–25 was inaugurated by Member of Parliament Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, along with MLA G.D. Harish Gowda and Gram Panchayat President V. Mahadev.

With the long-term vision of ensuring good health for children at a young age. The Anganwadi workers must provide nutritious food in the prescribed quantity and reminded them that it is their responsibility to nurture children into healthy, strong individuals and responsible citizens of society.

The MLA said that earlier ₹60 lakh had been sanctioned for road works in Dharmapura village. He added that he had also sanctioned funds for Maramma Temple and for the Basava idol and gopura of Ishwara Temple, besides works under the Morarji Desai Road Development Scheme, drinking water units and several other development works. He stated that a proposal has now been submitted for additional works costing ₹30 lakh under forthcoming grants.

He further said that due to the government's guarantee schemes—including ₹2,000 assistance for women, free electricity, free bus travel and distribution of 10 kg of rice—there is a strain on funds across all 224 Assembly constituencies, making development activities difficult. However, roads are being developed by pooling MP funds along with other grants. Substantial funds have already been provided to Dharmapura village and that grants would also be sanctioned for the Ambedkar Bhavan, Valmiki Bhavan and the Kumbara community, he added.

Those present at the programme included Gram Panchayat President V. Mahadev, Vice-President Jyothi, Taluk Panchayat Member Prabhakar, Gram Panchayat former President Vishwanath, leaders Satish Papanna, Ramesh, Gavinayak, Mallesh, Kalayya, Assistant Executive Engineer Puttanagaraju, Child Development Project Officer Harish S.G., Panchayat Development Officer M. Arun, Anganwadi teacher Lakshmi, along with Gram Panchayat members, village elders and prominent local leaders.

Give Up Plastic Packs, Use Paper Bags: Arivu creates awareness

MYSURU

The Arivu Organization conducted an awareness drive in and around Chamundipuram, urging traders and customers to give up plastic bags and adopt paper bags. As part of the initiative, paper bags were distributed to the public with an appeal to replace plastic bags with eco-friendly paper bags, thereby spreading awareness among the general public.

Addressing the gathering, Srikanth Kashyap, President of the Arivu Organization, said that bags and carry covers are an essential part of modern life and daily commercial activities. In this context, he appealed to everyone to act in an environment-friendly manner and join hands to protect the environment and work towards making the country plastic-free.

He emphasized that by using paper bags for daily needs instead of plastic carry bags, people can play a significant role in preventing air pollution. He called upon everyone, addressing them as dear friends, to collectively come together to protect and preserve the environment.

On this occasion, Srikanth Kashyap, President of the Arivu Organization; Apoorva Suresh, President of Apoorva Sneha Balaga; Shivu of Gaurishankar Nagar; Doora Rajanna; Anand; Jatti Prasad; Shivalinga Swamy; Purushottam; retired teacher Mahadeva Swamy, and several others were present.

"Kuvempu introduced a new idiom to Kannada language"

MYSURU

Senior folklorist Dr. Ragou opined that it does not appear that everyone celebrating Kuvempu's birth anniversary has truly internalised the literary consciousness awakened by Kuvempu. Speaking after releasing the books "Mane Manela Hanate Dr. B. R. Ambedkar" and "Manavatheya Mantra" authored by Dr. Ammasandra Suresh, at the Kuvempu remembrance programme organised in connection with the anniversary of Neralu Charitable Trust, he said Kuvempu not only transformed Kannada language and literature in tune with the demands of a new era, but also introduced a new literary idiom to it. The 20th century cannot be imagined without Kuvempu, and hence he is the poet of the century.

Kuvempu, the great philosopher who came after Basavanna, lived the way he wrote and wrote the way he lived. A symbol of self-respect and cultural pride, his arrival in Kannada literature was indeed a blessing to the world, he said. Senior journalist Amshi Prasannakumar, who released the Neralu e-magazine, said that e-magazines are increasingly gaining intellectual maturity and are reaching a wider audience with greater ease. The Neralu Charitable Trust is implementing several programmes for the welfare of Adivasis living in the Nagarahole Wildlife Sanctuary of Heggadadevanakote taluk, particularly focusing on the educational development of their children. Speaking about the books, senior professor of Hampi Kannada University, Prof. Chinnaswamy Sosale, said that in 80 years of democratic India, people have listened to and practised the Vedas, but have failed to read and understand the Constitution that was implemented to eradicate suffering and injustice. He observed that more importance has been given to mythological history than to real history, and emphasised the need to unveil India's history through factual and documentary evidence.

State-level Essay and poetry competition in memory of Dr Vijaya Dabbe

MYSURU

The Samata Study Center (Regd.), Mysore, has organized a state-level essay and poetry competition in memory of the founder president, Dr. Vijaya Dabbé, with the aim of encouraging young talent.

According to a press release, the eligibility: Essay Competition: Women writers aged 20 to 40 years. Poetry Competition: Students and young people aged 20 to 35 years.

Rules: Essay submissions should not exceed 1,500 words. Poetry participants should submit one original poem. Entries must not have been published or broadcast anywhere before. Proof of age must be attached (SSLC mark sheet or Aadhaar card).

Prizes:

Both competitions will have the same prize structure: 1st Prize: ₹5,000, 2nd Prize: ₹3,000

3rd Prize: ₹2,000. In addition, the top 10 participants from each competition, selected by the winners and judges' appreciation, will be invited to a one-day literary workshop in the last week of May.

Submission Instructions: Essays and poems should be clearly written or typed on one page.

On a separate sheet, provide your name, address, phone number, and email. All entries must reach on or before 15.03.2026. Address for submission: Smt. Vijaya Rao House No. 861, 14th Main, Vijayanagar 1st Stage, Mysore – 570017.
PHONE: 98454 22855

QUICK READ

Kundargi youth makes it to state Kho-Kho team

BAGALKOT

Prajwal, a player from Maruteshwara Kho-Kho Club in Kundargi village, Bilagi taluk, has been selected for the Karnataka state Kho-Kho team. He will represent the state in the 35th National Kho-Kho Championship for boys and girls under 14, scheduled from January 31 to February 4 in Kurukshetra, Haryana. Club office-bearers, senior players, village elders, and well-wishers congratulated Prajwal and wished him success in the national tournament. His achievement has brought pride to Kundargi village and is seen as an inspiration for young athletes in the region to pursue sports at higher levels.

Car-scooter crash injures two in Bhatkal

BHATKAL

Two people were injured in a car-scooter collision near City Light Cross in Navayat Colony on National Highway-66 on Wednesday morning. The victims, 20-year-old Syed Umar Rashad Sheikh from Madina Colony and 40-year-old Tauseef from Azad Nagar, Bhatkal, were first treated at Bhatkal Government Hospital and later referred to Mangalore Hospital for further care. The accident occurred around 11 am when a speeding car, overtaking a lorry from the Udupi-Sirsi route, hit the scooter, throwing it several meters and causing injuries to the rider. A case has been registered at Bhatkal Town Police Station, and investigations are ongoing.

Private bus catches fire near Shivamogga, passengers safe

SHIVAMOGGA

A private sleeper coach bus caught fire near the ninth milestone at Sudur village in Arasalu area. The bus, owned by Sri Annapoorneshwari Transport, was travelling from Nittur to Bengaluru with forty people onboard. Passengers managed to escape before flames spread. Twelve passengers suffered burn injuries and were shifted to McGann Hospital, Ripponpet Hospital, and private hospitals. The fire brigade reached quickly but the bus was completely destroyed. Police said a burning smell was noticed earlier. Ripponpet police registered a case. No deaths were reported. Officials are investigating the cause of the incident further.

Balancing forest protection with people's livelihoods

Khandre reviewed Shettihalli Sanctuary de-notification, balancing forest protection with residents' life, livelihood, after surveys and meetings

SHIVAMOGGA

Forest and Environment Minister Ishwar B. Khandre said the State government is working to protect forests and wildlife while also safeguarding people's livelihoods. He told reporters near the Tyavarekoppa Lion Safari that key decisions on the Shettihalli Wildlife Sanctuary and compensation for Sharavati project-affected families are in the final stage.

Khandre said a proposal to de-notify parts of Shettihalli Sanctuary has been pending since around 2016. When the area was first notified in 1974, nearly 395 sq km was included, covering bus stands, FCI godowns, APMC yards, government offices, and residential zones. Officials have completed field inspections and surveys, and several review meetings have been held. "Forest wealth must be protected, but life and livelihood also matter. I have come to review this both administratively and emotionally before a final decision," he said. On Sharavati victims, the Minister said the issue has reached a decisive stage after an appeal in the Supreme Court. The court directed the Centre and Forest Department to take a joint decision. The Revenue Department is identifying eligible families, and once the final list is ready, the State will provide long-pending permanent compensation, he added.

He also listed measures to reduce human–wildlife conflict, including elephant and leopard task forces, more staff, better equipment, railway barricades, solar fencing, control rooms, and awareness drives. The goal, he said, is to protect both human and animal lives. Shivamogga Rural MLA Sharada Pooryanayaka and officials were present.

District launches drive to spread Leprosy awareness

GADAG

A district-level meeting was held at the Gadag Deputy Commissioner's office to prepare for the Touch Leprosy Awareness Campaign, which will run from January 30 to February 13. The campaign is part of the National Leprosy Eradication Programme and aims to spread awareness and remove fear and stigma about the disease.

District Collector C.N. Sridhar chaired the meeting and asked all departments to work together to make the campaign successful.

He stressed the need for proper planning, public participation, and awareness activities in both urban and rural areas.

District Health Officer Dr. Rajendra Basarigida said leprosy is caused by a bacterium called Mycobacterium leprae. He explained that the disease is completely curable if treated on time. Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT), the standard treatment for leprosy, is available free of cost at all primary health centres and designated leprosy hospitals across the district.

Health officials said the campaign will include door-to-door visits, awareness rallies, school programmes, and information sessions to help people identify early symptoms and seek treatment without delay. They also said the drive aims to end social discrimination against people affected by leprosy.

During the meeting, officials released pamphlets and posters related to leprosy awareness and prevention. These materials will be distributed widely during the campaign period.

District Survey Officer Dr. Venkatesh Rathod, District RCH Officer Dr. Meenakshi, District Family Welfare Officer Dr. Y.K. Bhajantri, Epidemiologist Praveen Nidagundi, Dr. H.L. Giraddi, District Health Education Officer Roopsena Chavan, and other health staff attended the meeting and shared their plans for campaign activities across the district.

District Collector C.N. Sridhar urged all departments to collaborate, emphasizing proper planning, public participation, and awareness campaigns in urban and rural areas for successful implementation.

Protesters accused the new DSP of ignoring Dalit complaints, intimidating citizens, pressuring false reports, and favoring opposing parties

Dalit group protests alleged misconduct by Deputy Superintendent of Police

SHIVAMOGGA

Members of the Karnataka Dalit Sangharsh Samiti staged a protest in Shivamogga accusing a senior police officer of neglecting complaints from oppressed communities.

Led by district coordinator Harmagatta Rangappa, the group garlanded the statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar at the municipal premises before marching to the Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement (DCRE) police station near Kote.

Protesters alleged that the newly appointed Deputy Superintendent of Police was not responding properly when Dalit citizens went to file complaints.

They claimed he intimidated complainants, pressured them to write non-cognizable cases, and frequently called the opposite parties to the station for discussions.

The group further alleged that genuine atrocity cases were being weakened and later closed through "B" reports sent to courts. Raising slogans, the protesters demanded immediate suspension of the DySP and a high-level investigation into his conduct, including scrutiny of his mobile phone communications.

They also urged the government to post officers who are sensitive to Dalit issues at the Shivamogga DCRE station. Among other demands, the Samiti called for monthly grievance meetings, inspection of complaint sites along with victims, and strict action against staff who allegedly shared complaint copies with the accused.

The organisation sought a suo motu case and re-investigation of earlier closed cases. Several leaders including Arun Kumar, S. Kumar, Nagaraj Gajanur, Manjunath Navule, Parashuram, D.K. Ramesh, Manjunath, and Avinash joined the protest. A memorandum listing these demands was submitted to senior officials.

Protesters said their agitation was peaceful and aimed at protecting the dignity and rights of Dalit families. Police officials did not issue an immediate response to the allegations when contacted by reporters today.

Gadag promotes foster care for children

GADAG

The Gadag district administration is encouraging families to provide temporary care for children in need under the Guardianship and Foster Care Scheme. This initiative follows the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act-2015 and its 2021 amendment.

Government-run children's homes and voluntary organizations in Gadag help boys and girls who lack parental care. Under Section 44 of the Juvenile Justice Act, the Child Welfare Committee can place children with non-relative families for a temporary or extended period of up to one year. Care may continue until the child reaches 18, depending on an assessment of their needs.

The scheme emphasizes that every child deserves to grow up in a family environment. Children who cannot be adopted between ages 6 and 8, or children with special needs, can be placed in foster care. Foster families are responsible for providing food, clothing, shelter, education, protection, and emotional support.

District initiative focuses on stopping school dropouts

SHIVAMOGGA

Aparna Kolla, member of the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, urged officials and teachers to make sure that no child drops out of school in the district. She spoke on Wednesday at a training programme held at the District Diet Training Institute in Shivamogga. The programme was organised jointly by the Child Rights Commission, district administration, police, health department, education department, women and child welfare officials, and the District Child Protection Unit. Officers were trained on laws related to juvenile justice, child marriage ban, POCSO, child rights, and the Right to Education Act.

Kolla said the government is already giving mid day meals, free textbooks, uniforms, and hostel facilities. Still, some children are missing school. She asked teachers and officials to meet parents, explain the value of education, and bring children back to classrooms.

She also said students must be told about child marriage laws and POCSO protections. Police officers should visit schools, speak to children about safety, and guide them on their rights.

Gadag to celebrate Shri Madiwala Machideva Jayanti

GADAG

A grand programme to mark Shri Madiwala Machideva Jayanti will be held on February 2 at 3 pm at the auditorium hall of the Gadag District Administration building.

The event is being organised jointly by the Gadag District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and the Kannada and Culture Department.

Several senior leaders and ministers will take part in the celebrations. Legislative Council Speaker Basavaraj Horatti and Minister for Kannada and Culture and Backward Classes Welfare Shivaraj S Thangadgi will attend as chief dignitaries. District In-charge Minister Dr. H.K. Patil, who also handles Law, Justice, Human Rights, Parliamentary Affairs, Legislation, and Tourism, will preside over the function.

Among the chief guests will be Government Chief Whip Salim Ahmed, Rona MLA G.S. Patil, Haveri MP and former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, and MP P.C. Gaddigowdara.

Other dignitaries include D.R. Patil, C.C. Patil, Dr. Chandru Lamani, S.V. Sankanur, Pradeep Shettar, Akbarsabha Babarji, and B.B. Asuti. Senior officials such as District In-charge Secretary Ramandeep Chaudhary and Belagavi Regional Commissioner Janaki K.M. will attend as special invitees. A special lecture on the life and values of Shri Madiwala Machideva will be delivered by Sujatha Sharanappa Madiwal, a teacher from Shirgumpi Government High School.

District officials said the event aims to spread awareness about the saint's teachings and inspire people to follow the path of social harmony and service. Deputy Commissioner C.N. Sridhar, Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer, Superintendent of Police Rohan Jagadish, Additional Deputy Commissioner Dr. Duragesh K.R., and Kannada and Culture Department Assistant Director Dr. Basavaraj V. Bellary have invited the public to attend in large numbers. Residents are encouraged to participate and celebrate the occasion.

Hospet activists highlight importance of constitutional vigilance

VIJAYANAGAR

As part of the 77th Republic Day celebrations, several progressive and pro-Constitution organisations gathered at Jai Bhim Circle in Hospet city and publicly read the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

Somashekhar Banthamane, member of the Kannada University Syndicate and district coordinator of the Constitution Protection Committee, said the Constitution written under the leadership of Dr B.R. Ambedkar protects equality and justice. He said people must stay alert when any attempt is made to weaken constitutional values.

Banthamane also criticised reported moves to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme. He said changing names would not help development and alleged that many rural and backward communities depend on such welfare programmes for survival.

He questioned how funds would be managed when states are already facing financial pressure. He further alleged that some recent policy steps at the national level could affect the rights of marginalised communities. He said citizens would respond democratically if they felt their rights were threatened. T. Vasudev, President of the Vijayanagar District Babasaheb Ambedkar Sangh, said public awareness about the Constitution is very important. He noted that their organisation works to educate people about legal rights and social justice.

During the event, members of the Wake Up Karnataka organisation released an awareness booklet related to electoral and constitutional issues.

MODERN ADDICTION ALERT

Experts warn against mobile use for children

HARAPANAHALLI

Zonal Resource Person Manjunath Kovi warned that excessive use of mobile phones is harming the physical and mental health of children today. He spoke at the third-year anniversary program of the Government Upgraded Model Primary School in Uchchangidurga village, emphasizing that mobile devices have become a modern addiction.

Kovi urged parents to take an active role in limiting their children's screen time, including reducing TV and mobile use, especially with upcoming exams. He highlighted that children's growth, focus, and mental well-being are at risk if proper limits are not set.

The school anniversary celebration also included a sports meet, where winners were congratulated, and various cultural programs such as dance and drama performed by the students. The event brought together teachers, students, and community members to celebrate the school's achievements and encourage participation in extracurricular activities.

Gram Panchayat President Geeta Kumaraswamy, Vice President Madralli Kenchappa, SDMC President K. Dadarappa, head teacher Sadeva, and local leaders including MM Chandrappa, Kottureshappa, Sivakumar, Bhagyamma, Kurudi Revanasiddappa, Somesekhar Gowda, Siddappa, Siddeshwar Patil, Mattihalli Shekharappa, Manjappa, and Yuvraj were present.

The program highlighted the importance of community involvement in education and health awareness, sending a strong message about protecting children from harmful technology while nurturing their talents through sports and cultural activities.

Street Vendors Invited To Join Pension Scheme

CHIKKABALLAPUR

Applications have opened online under the Pradhan Mantri Shramyogi Maan-Dhan (PM-SYM) scheme, which offers a guaranteed monthly pension of ₹3,000 to street vendors after the age of 60, with contributions from both the subscriber and the Centre. A special registration fair is being organised by the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) in urban local bodies from January 15 to February 15. Eligible beneficiaries include PM Swa-Nidhi loan recipients and their family members aged 18–40, earning up to ₹15,000 a month and not covered under IT, ESI, PF or NPS. Applicants must carry Aadhaar, bank details and an Aadhaar-linked mobile phone.

QUICK READ

Dog guards teens' bodies through blizzard in HP

CHAMBA

A pet Pitbull named Sheru stayed beside the bodies of two missing boys during a snowstorm in Himachal Pradesh. 19-year-old Viksit Rana and 14-year-old Piyush Kumar went trekking on January 23 to shoot videos for a vlog. After three days of searching, rescue teams found Viksit's body with Sheru sitting loyally beside him. Piyush's body was discovered later. The boys and Sheru were airlifted and returned to their families. Locals praised Sheru's courage and loyalty.

Man kills co-worker over beef dispute in UP

VARANASI

A man was arrested for allegedly killing his co-worker over a beef-related dispute in Varanasi. Virendra, 31, strangled Aftab Alam after claiming the victim "tricked" him into eating beef and taunted him. Alam's body was found on January 8 in Mahagaon village with blood from his nose and mouth. Police investigation and CCTV footage revealed Virendra's involvement. Authorities recovered the rope, Alam's Aadhaar, ATM card, and phone. Virendra confessed and said revenge drove him. Police are still searching for his accomplice.

Contaminated water causes 62-year-old's death

INDORE

A 62-year-old man, Khubchand Bandhaiya, died in Indore's Bhagirathpura area, with his family blaming contaminated drinking water. Locals say this is the 29th death in a month-long diarrhoea outbreak. Bandhaiya had been treated for vomiting and diarrhoea but passed away at home. His son claimed authorities did not send an ambulance despite requests. A state government report linked 16 deaths in Bhagirathpura to the water crisis. The community remains concerned as the outbreak continues to affect residents.

Govt committed to true social justice: Prez Murmu

The President highlights growth, social justice and vision of Viksit Bharat as she addresses Budget Session in Parliament

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu addressed the joint sitting of Parliament on Wednesday, marking the start of the Budget Session, and reaffirmed the government's commitment to "true social justice." She highlighted key achievements over the past decade, including welfare measures for women, Dalits, and Adivasis, with social security benefits reaching nearly 95 crore citizens and 25 crore lifted out of poverty. Murmu also paid tribute to Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, calling his death in a recent plane crash an "irreparable loss."

On development, the President lauded India's infrastructure and engineering milestones, including expanded railway connectivity, Vande Bharat trains, near-complete electrification, and record-breaking projects such as the Chenab and Pamban Bridges. She cited growth in manufacturing, electronics, agro-commodities, and fisheries, emphasizing the strengthening of India's foundation across sectors.

Regarding national security, Murmu highlighted Operation Sindoor, anti-Maoist campaigns, and the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty, noting that fear and distrust have reduced from 126 districts to eight, with nearly 2,000 Maoists surrendering last year. She also referred to Mission Sudarshan Chakra to further enhance defence readiness.

The President celebrated India's rich heritage, commemorating the 350th martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the 150th birth anniversary of tribal leader Birsa Munda, and the contributions of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, inspiring younger generations towards a Viksit Bharat (Developed India).

The Economic Survey will be tabled on Thursday by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, followed by the Union Budget presentation on Sunday, marking key financial steps for the coming year.

Cong lambasts Centre

The Congress sharply criticized the Modi government after President Murmu's Parliament address, calling it "insipid" and full of "hollow promises." The speech, marking the Budget session, highlighted Viksit Bharat, Swadeshi campaigns, and the VB-G RAM G Act. Congress leaders, including KC Venugopal and Manish Tewari, said it merely repeated past achievements without vision. Opposition protests demanded the Act's repeal and reinstatement of MGNREGA, highlighting concerns over rural employment and accountability.

KEY POINTS

- The current government has hastened the development of the country.
- In the last 10-11 years, India has strengthened its foundation in every sector.
- Social security benefits are now available to nearly 95 crore citizens of the country and that 25 crore Indians have escaped poverty in the last 10 years.
- The government has built a 'corruption-free' system, which is commendable.
- Indian Railways an example of infrastructural growth.
- The trust on Indian defence platforms has increased.
- The security forces have also taken decisive action against Maoist terror.
- When the country remembers the contribution of its ancestors, the new generation gets inspiration.

10-year pact to bolster India-US defence partnership

US Congressional delegation and Ambassador met India's Defence Secretary to discuss deepening military ties and defence industry cooperation under the 10-year Major Defence Partnership Framework Agreement.

NEW DELHI

A United States Congressional delegation led by Mike Rogers, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, along with US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, met Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh on January 27.

The meeting focused on enhancing India-US defence cooperation under the recently signed 10-year Major Defence Partnership Framework Agreement.

Officials discussed strengthening the defence industry, expanding military-to-military exercises, advancing information sharing, and collaborating on technology and regional security. The discussions highlighted the importance of a strong bilateral defence relationship for ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

US Ambassador Gor said the long-term agreement would significantly deepen defence cooperation. "Joint exercises will continue, additional sales are in progress. This is a strong relationship," he tweeted, thanking Defence Secretary Singh for hosting the delegation.

The framework, signed in October 2025 by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth during the ADMM-Plus in Kuala Lumpur, sets a unified vision for the next decade. It aims to strengthen strategic convergence and establish defence as a major pillar of India-US relations.

Rajnath Singh described the agreement as a signal of growing cooperation, ensuring a free and rules-based Indo-Pacific. Hegseth called it a cornerstone for regional stability, emphasizing enhanced coordination, tech cooperation, and information sharing.

The India-US defence partnership continues to expand through joint exercises, defence industry collaboration, science and technology initiatives, and coordination with global and regional partners, solidifying ties for strategic and security interests over the coming decade.

A milestone visit concludes: European Presidents depart from India

NEW DELHI

European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen concluded their landmark three-day state visit to India this week, achieving 13 significant outcomes to strengthen India-EU ties. Costa departed on Wednesday, while von der Leyen left on Tuesday evening, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

The visit was described as "highly successful," resulting in agreements to enhance trade, security, defence, clean energy, mobility, science, and disaster management cooperation. MEA said these outcomes will expand European market access for Indian goods and services, create jobs, and support national progress.

A highlight of the visit was the signing of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), hailed as the "Mother of All Deals."

The FTA is a modern, rules-based trade partnership aimed at addressing global challenges while deepening market integration between India, the world's fourth-largest economy, and the EU, the second-largest. With this deal, India becomes the third Asian country, after Japan and South Korea, to secure a comprehensive trade agreement with the EU.

The leaders also signed a Security and Defence Partnership, marking the first overarching defence and security framework between India and the EU. This agreement is designed to enhance cooperation across strategic, regional, and global security areas.

India condemns terrorism, reflects on holocaust lessons

NEW DELHI

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Wednesday drew a parallel between the October 2023 Hamas terror attack on Israel and India's own experiences with cross-border terrorism, referencing the April 2025 attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, which killed 26 people. Addressing the International Holocaust Remembrance Day event in New Delhi, Misri said India immediately empathises with nations facing terrorism, recalling the killing of around 1,200 Israelis and the abduction of hundreds during the Hamas attack. He emphasised that India condemned the attack and reaffirmed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement of solidarity with Israel.

SC appoints Justice Kaul as mediator in TN temple dispute

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday appointed former judge Sanjay Kishan Kaul as principal mediator to resolve a 120-year-old dispute between two Sri Vaishnava sects over rituals at the historic Sri Devarajaswamy Temple in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu.

The conflict involves the Thenkalai and Vadakalai sects, with the Thenkalai historically performing prayers inside the sanctum sanctorum. Vadakalai members had challenged the Madras High Court's December ruling that upheld the Thenkalai's exclusive rights to perform ceremonial worship, arguing that it violated their constitutional freedom of religion under Article 25.

A bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant noted that senior counsels on both sides had agreed to explore mediation to allow daily rituals to continue amicably. Justice Kaul, former Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, will be assisted by two experts familiar with Tamil, Sanskrit, temple rituals, and its history. The case is next scheduled for March 13.

Senior advocates CS Vaidyanathan, Satish Parasaran, and Arvind P. Datar appeared for the petitioners, emphasizing that the high court had relied on pre-Constitution precedents granting hereditary rights to the Thenkalai sect, which were rendered obsolete by the 1971 Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Amendment Act.

Counsel for the respondents highlighted that the Thenkalai ritual recitals date back over 300 years and are integral to temple tradition.

Israeli envoy confirms PM Modi's upcoming visit plans

NEW DELHI

Israeli Ambassador to India Reuven Azar confirmed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has received an official invitation to visit Israel, with dates to be announced later. Speaking at an event marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day in New Delhi, Azar described India–Israel ties as a strong strategic partnership and said 2025 was a productive year, marked by a bilateral investment treaty, security agreements, financial protocols, and progress toward a free trade deal. He noted counter-terrorism cooperation as a key pillar and expressed optimism for deeper ties in 2026. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri drew parallels between India's experiences with cross-border terrorism and the October 2023 Hamas attacks, reaffirming India's support for Israel and calling for global condemnation of terrorism.

ABB secures major Mumbai Metro traction supply deal

MUMBAI

Global technology company ABB has won a major contract from Titagarh Rail Systems to supply advanced traction systems and Train Control and Management Systems (TCMS) for Mumbai Metro's expansion. The order covers 40 metro trains, each with six coaches, set to operate on Metro Line 5 (Orange Line) and Metro Line 6 (Pink Line), improving connectivity and reducing travel time across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Line 5 will connect Thane and Kalyan via Bhiwandi, while Line 6 will run between Swami Samarth Nagar and Vikhroli. ABB will deliver an integrated solution including traction converters, auxiliary converters, traction motors, and TCMS software. Of the total trains, 22 will serve Line 5 and 18 will be deployed on Line 6. The equipment will be manufactured in India, with converters produced in Bengaluru and traction motors in Vadodara. Local engineering, testing, and maintenance teams will support operations. ABB said the project marks its first entry into the 25 kV AC metro segment in India and strengthens its partnership with Titagarh Rail Systems, which began in 2023. The order also includes phased co-production of traction components and industrial collaboration, aligning with the Centre's Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives. ABB highlighted that the project will help deliver energy-efficient and low-emission urban mobility solutions for Mumbai, reinforcing its growing presence in India's metro sector and supporting sustainable infrastructure development in rapidly expanding cities.

IN THE COURT OF THE II ADDITIONAL CIVIL JUDGE & J.M.F.C AT DODDABALLAPUR
Cmis. No. 1202/2025

Smt. LALITHAMMA, Aged about 42 years, W/o. Late. Suresh.S.Agni, R/at, # 4/2, Sanjeevappa Road, Chikkabommasandra, Bangalore-560065, Now at Doddaballapur **PETITIONER.**

V/s

The Registrar Birth & Death, CMC Doddaballapur. RESPONDENT.

PAPER DRAFT PUBLICATION

Whereas, the petitioner has filed the above petitioner under section 13(3) & 14 of birth and death Act rules 1969, directing the respondent to issue the death Certificate of petitioner's mother ADI LAKSHAMMA W/o. Late. Pandurangaiah who was reportedly died on 08-10-1993, at his Residency at Veerabhadranapalya, Doddaballapur town, Bengaluru Rural District.

Hence you are hereby summoned to appear before this court either in person or through an advocate duly instructed on your behalf on 03.03.2026 at 11 A.M. to answer or oppose the case thereto.

Take notice, if you fail to appear on the above said date and time, the case will be heard and decided ex-party.

Given under my hand and the seal of the court on 24.01.2026

By the order of the court
Chief Ministeral Officer, II Additional Civil Judge & JMFC Doddaballapur
Advocate for Petitioner: Date:30-12-2025.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **SUNDRAMMA C** W/o Mahadevamurthy P. aged about 49 years, residing at No. 197/1, Sri Bhagyalakshmi Nilaya, Near Surya Bakery, Hebbalu 1st Stage, Metagalli Post, Mysore City have changed my name from **SUMA** to **SUNDRAMMA C.** before the Notary Public C L Basavaraj, Advocate and Notary Mysore vide affidavit dt: 28-01-2026

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SHAKTI DIALOGUE

NCW's 'Shakti Samvaad' at Bharat Mandapam from today

NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Women (NCW) will host 'Shakti Samvaad', a two-day interactive meeting with State Women Commissions, at Bharat Mandapam on January 29-30. Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta will inaugurate the event.

Shakti Samvaad aims to strengthen coordination between NCW and State Women Commissions, share best practices, and build their capacities. This is the third national-level edition this year, after successful meetings in Ayodhya and Mumbai, reflecting NCW's commitment to cooperative federalism in women's rights.

State Women Commissions from across India will participate, making it a pan-India dialogue. The event will also see the release of NCW's book, Safarnama, sharing staff testimonials, and prize distribution for an online poster-making contest on 'Stay Safe Online'.

Over two days, discussions will focus on improving complaint handling, investigation mechanisms, helpline systems, reviewing state-specific laws, and strengthening engagement with NCW in legislative matters. Participants will also deliberate on advancing 'Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat', planning district-level Jan Sunwai, and sharing innovative practices adopted by State Women Commissions.

NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar said, "Shakti Samvaad is not just a meeting; it is a shared resolve. When NCW and State Women Commissions come together, coordination is faster, and solutions are more grounded." She added that continuous dialogue is key to ensuring women-centric laws and services reach every woman.

The two-day event is expected to result in actionable outcomes and stronger institutional collaboration, furthering the safety, rights, and dignity of women across India.

QUICK READ

Delhi High Court Bench to hear Rani Kapur case

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court will hear a civil suit filed by Rani Kapur, mother of late industrialist Sunjay Kapur, tomorrow. Justice Vikas Mahajan recused himself from the case, which challenges the formation of the RK Family Trust. Rani Kapur claims the trust was created without her consent, excluding her from her estate. She alleges she was misled and made to sign documents while unwell.

Police, ITBP brave snow at Kedarnath Dham

KEDARNATH

Uttarakhand Police and ITBP personnel are working tirelessly at Kedarnath amid heavy winter snowfall. The forces are protecting the holy shrine while clearing snow from residential areas and access routes. Despite freezing temperatures, they remain alert to ensure emergency services continue without disruption. Their efforts reflect courage, dedication, and effective management in harsh conditions, inspiring locals and pilgrims alike. Officials praised their selfless service in maintaining safety and accessibility at the sacred town during extreme weather.

Armed suspect arrested at Patna Court gate

PATNA

Panic broke out at Patna Civil Court on Wednesday when police caught an armed suspect at Gate Number 1 during a routine security check. The Pirbahore police said two men entered the court with criminal intent, but one was caught trying to bring a pistol inside. Lawyers, staff, and visitors were alarmed by the incident. Advocates called for stronger security and stricter checks at all entry points to prevent future breaches and ensure safety within the court premises.

Multiple landing attempts, go-around, clearance, then a crash

Continued from page 1

The aircraft carrying Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar was cleared for landing in Baramati on Wednesday morning after multiple attempts, but having finally received landing clearance it did not give any 'read-back' or response to the ATC, and moments later burst into flames on the edge of the runway.

The aircraft was trying to land amid poor visibility, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said earlier.

A statement by his ministry recounted the final minutes of the ill-fated Learjet 45 belonging to VSR Ventures Pvt Ltd that crashed, leading to the death of all five persons on board including Pawar.

Baramati has an 'uncontrolled airfield', and traffic information is provided by the instructors/pilots from the Flying training Organisations at Baramati. The aircraft VI-SSK first came in contact at 8.18 am, as per the Baramati Air Traffic Control (ATC).

Its next call was at 30 nautical miles inbound to Baramati. It was advised to descend in "visual meteorological conditions" at the pilot's discretion. The crew enquired about the winds and visibility, and were informed that the winds were calm and visibility was around 3,000 metres.

"Next the aircraft reported on the final approach of Runway 11 and the runway was not in sight to them. They initiated a go-around in the first approach," the civil aviation ministry statement said.

After the go-around, the crew was again asked if they could spot the runway. The reply was: "Runway is currently not in sight, will call when runway is in sight". After a few seconds, the crew reported that they could spot the runway.

"The aircraft was cleared to land on runway 11 at 0843 IST (8.43 am). However, they did not give a readback of the landing clearance (did not respond to ATC). Next, the ATC saw the flames around the threshold of runway 11 at 0844 IST (8.44 am)," the statement said.

The emergency services then rushed to the crash site, but it was too late. The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) has taken over the investigation. DG, AAIB is reaching the accident site for investigation, the statement said.

PILOTS KILLED IN THE CRASH

The pilots on board were Captain Sumit Kapoor and Captain Shambhavi Pathak, both experienced aviation professionals. VSR Aviation, which operated the flight, confirmed their identities. Captain Shambhavi Pathak was the daughter of an Army officer. She studied at Air Force Bal Bharati School and completed a BSc in Aeronautics, Aviation, and Aerospace Science and Technology from the University of Mumbai. She later trained at the New Zealand International Commercial Pilot Academy. Captain Sumit Kapoor, who was the more experienced of the two, was responsible for leading the flight crew during critical phases, including take-off and landing. VSR Aviation's top official VK Singh said both pilots were based in Delhi and had logged extensive flying hours.

Ajit Pawar: A family rooted in politics

MUMBAI

The Pawar family is one of Maharashtra's most influential political dynasties. At its centre is Sharad Pawar and a network of relatives in politics and public life. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Sharad Pawar's estranged nephew and once seen as his successor, died in a plane crash on January 28, 2026. Over decades, members of this family built a strong presence in regional and national politics, especially through the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). The family's influence was based in Baramati, Pune district, where multiple generations contested elections, led cooperative movements, and held leadership roles.The recent plane crash that claimed Ajit Pawar's life shocked the state and highlighted both the political and personal importance of his family tree.

ORIGINS OF THE PAWAR FAMILY

The Pawar family traces its roots to rural Maharashtra, with its base in Baramati, a key political and agricultural region. Sharad Pawar emerged from this background and became one of the most powerful leaders in the state. Over time, members of his extended family entered politics, shaped by the political environment around him.

AAIB takes over plane crash probe

NEW DELHI

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) has officially taken charge of the probe into the Baramati plane crash that killed Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four others.

A specialised AAIB team has left Delhi and will proceed to Baramati after landing in Pune to begin detailed on-ground investigations.

The Learjet 45 aircraft (registration VT-SSK), operated by VSR, lost control during landing on Wednesday morning. The crash claimed all five lives on board, including Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, a personal security officer, an attendant, and two crew members. The passengers were identified as Vidip Jadhav and Pinky Mali, while the flight crew included Pilot-in-Command Sumit Kapur and Second-in-Command Shambhavi Pathak.

Emergency responders and senior security officials reached the crash site immediately, but there were no survivors. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has also arrived to assist in the technical investigation. Authorities confirmed that Ajit Pawar's body was identified through his wristwatch.

The Maharashtra Police and AAIB are conducting a detailed investigation, examining the wreckage to assess speed, angle of impact, and flight dynamics. The aircraft's black box and cockpit voice recorder will be analysed to study pilot communication and decisions in the final moments. Maintenance and service records will also be reviewed to evaluate airworthiness.

Officials said the probe aims to determine the exact cause of the crash, and further updates will be released as the investigation progresses. The findings are expected to provide clarity on the sequence of events leading to the tragic accident.

CM Mamata threatens to move court over SIR

KOLKATA

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday strongly criticized the BJP and Election Commission over the SIR revision exercise in West Bengal.

She claimed the SIR is being used to implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) under the guise of voter list updating. About 140 people, she alleged, have been wrongly removed or shown as deceased from the voter list.

Addressing a public meeting in Singur, Banerjee said she would approach the court as a common citizen if required. She emphasized that her fight is for people's voting rights, not political gains. She also presented documents and evidence supporting her claims about the SIR irregularities.

The Chief Minister targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, accusing them of neglecting housing and road projects in Bengal. She criticized government scrutiny over women's surname changes after marriage, questioning the logic behind it. Banerjee warned that any attempt to punish her would face resistance from farmers and local communities.

Highlighting Singur as her favourite place, Banerjee said she has returned land to farmers and plans an agro-industrial park on 8 acres to combine agriculture and industry. She mentioned private companies, including Amazon and Flipkart, are setting up warehouses, while a 77-acre industrial park will be developed.

Remembering victims of the Anandapur warehouse fire, Banerjee announced Rs 10 lakh compensation for families and promised jobs for one member of each family as civic volunteers.

Who is NCP chief's wife Sunetra Pawar?

Ajit Pawar was married to Sunetra Pawar, who is also active in social and political work in Baramati. Sunetra, daughter of former Maharashtra minister Padamsinh Bajirao Patil, was regarded as a steady and influential presence in his political life. In 2024, Ajit fielded Sunetra against his cousin Supriya Sule in Baramati in the 2024 LS polls, a decision he later admitted was a mistake.

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Regd Office: 8/596 A, Padmaprabha Building, Near Sreerama Swami Temple, Cherppu - Thriprayar Road, Thriprayar, Thrissur, Kerala 680567 | **Phone No.:** 0487-3520504, **Website:** www.manappuramhomefin.com

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of **Manappuram Home Finance Ltd ("MAHOFIN")** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest *[Act], 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 9 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a **Demand Notice** calling upon the borrowers and co-borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice and Interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **Symbolic** possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said *[Act] read with rule 9 of the said rules. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Manappuram Home Finance Ltd as mentioned below for each of the respective properties:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower and Co-borrower / Loan account number/ Branch	Description Of Secured Asset In Respect Of Which Interest Has Been Created	Date of Demand Notice sent & Outstanding Amount	Date of Possession
1	Nanjappa S, Maheshwarii N, Siddesha N, /NHL00900025135/ Vivekananda Circle	Property No. 1566/1 Unique No. 150800103200220982 UmmatturuVillageAndGramapanchayathChamarajanagar Talluk And District 571316, Main Road, Chamarajanagar, P.O.Ummathur,Chamrajnagar,Karnataka,Pin:571316. Site Measuring 33.45 Sq Meters Building 33.00 Sq Meters. East-Site Belongs To Nanjamannamma, West-House Belongs To Rajamma W/O Ramaiah, South-Road, North-House Belongs To Mahadevamma W/O Puttarangaiah	21-10-2025 & Rs.492579/-	24-01-2026
2	Zakir Hussain M D, Vaseem Unnisa M, B T Pradeep Kumar, Mohammed Saqlain Hussain, /NHL00930013151/ Tumkur	Khatha No. 1194/1113/3745 Measuring East To West 20 Feet & North To South 36 Feet Mallika Pura Badavane Sira Municipality Sira Taluk, Tumkur District-572137., Main Road, Tumkur, P.O. Sira, Tumkur, Karnataka, Pin: 572137. East-House of Shahin Taj of Same Property, West-Mutton Market Road, South-Property pf Wajid Khan, North-House pf Syed Sardar	21-10-2025 & Rs.527167/-	24-01-2026
3	Sannaiah Basavegowda, Kavitha S, Mahesha CB, /MO90LALONS 000005007897/ Mysore	Property No. 37-522-209/B/1, 7th Ward, Assessment No. 162/1, Hosa Kurubara Street, 5th Cross Road, Ward No. 22, Kollegala Town, Chamarajanagara, P.O. Kollegal Devangapet, Chamrajnagar, Karnataka, Pin: 571440 Measuring E-W 5.486411 Meter & N-S 33.832868 Meter. East-Pl.D. 37-522-211, West-Pl.D. 37-139-37/ Property of Harish, South-37-522 - 5th Cross Road, North-Pid No. 37-522-209C	21-10-2025 & Rs.429050/-	24-01-2026
4	Lakshmi A, Shevkumar A, Muttanna N, /MHL01170023126/ Raichur	Property No. 5-5-304/81, Sy. No. 970/1 Unique No. 23115549, Totally Measuring 2.87102 Sq. meter. Ward No. 13 Indira Nagar Sindhanur, (Tq) Sindhanur District Raichur, Near Mazid, Sindhnur, P.O. Sindhnur, Raichur, Karnataka, Pin: 584128. East-Property No. 39-533-452, West-Road, South-Property No. 39-512-456/1, North-Property No. 39-512-458	21-10-2025 & Rs.280852/-	24-01-2026
5	Manjunath G B, Karibasamma B, /NHL00510007788/ Shimoga	Property No: 102/1A, Total 45.52 Sq.meter, Hale Goddnakoppa, Shikaripura Tq, Shikaripura Tq, Shikarpur, P.O. Hosagodnakoppa, Shimoga, Karnataka, Pin: 577427. East-House Of Pakeerappa, West-House of Hanumanthappa, South-Panchayath Road, North Property of Thirukamma	21-10-2025 & Rs.515166/-	24-01-2026
6	Usha Rani, Francis M, /MA10MHLONS 000005007521/ Shimoga	Property No. 18/B Katha No. 09/H No.18/B, Ward No. 26/Hudco Colony Bullapura Badvane, 47.3 × 24 Feet, Including 20 × 24 Feet, Bhadravathi Town Shimoga, Shimoga, P.O. Bhadravathi, Shimoga, Karnataka, Pin: 577301. East-Conservancy Road, West-Road, South-Property of Qt No. Hudco 18/C, North-Property of Qt No. Hudco 18/A	21-10-2025 & Rs.146436/-	24-01-2026
7	Praveenkumar B Vakrad, Neelavva B Vakad, Basappa Ningappa Vakrad, Nilanjan Mutaguru, /NHL00260032913/ Hubli	Property No. 151400200700221195, Survey No: 54/B, Measuring East To West: 3.30 Mtr And North To South: 11.50 Mtr And Building 36.44 Sq.mtr, Hammigi Village, Mundaragi Taluk Gadag Dist, Bus Stop, Mundargi, P.O. Hammigi, Gadag, Karnataka, Pin: 582118. East Property of Mallappa Mutagur, West-Property of Nagaraj Vakrad, South-Property of Veerabhadrappa Holalammanavar, North-Road	21-10-2025 & Rs.361807/-	24-01-2026
8	Praveen Nagappa Karajagi, Jayavva Nagappa Karjagi, Vinaya Nagaraj Muragi, /NHL00260011392/ Hubli	Residential Property Bearing Vpc No. 1346/4 Part of Plot No. 7 Pl.D. No. 151300400400120677, Total Measuring 51.28 Sq.mtrs And Building Measuring 51.28 Situated Gudageri Village Tq: Kundgol, Dist: Dharwad, Karnataka, Pin: 581107. East-Common Passage, West-Property of Shivanagouda T Murinennavar, South Property of Shankrappa Alagawadi, North-Property of S B Bagodi	21-10-2025 & Rs.477129/-	24-01-2026
9	Asha K, Kumara K, Sarojamma K, Krishna K, /MHL00340028513/ Mysore	All That Piece And Parcel of Property No. 76/170, As Per Form No. 11B Unique No. 152100501800400179, Totally Measuring 120.11 Square Meters And Building Measuring 120.11 Square Meters Doddayagati Village, Karadahalli Gp, Nagamangala Taluk Mandya Karnataka, Pin: 571432. East-Road, West-Survey No Land, South-Galli And House of Channaiah, North-Canal Galli And House of Shivanna	21-10-2025 & Rs.419415/-	24-01-2026
10	Nagaraju T, Mangala N, Suresh N S, /NHL00930018187/ Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Katha No. 385/30 And E- Katha No. 152500900900500379 Measuring E-W: 9.14 Meters And N-S: 6.09 Meters, Situated At Timlapura Village, Kasaba Hobli, Tumkur Taluk, Tumkur District, Karnataka, Pin: 572106. East-Site No 29, West-Road, South-Site No 31, North-Road	21-10-2025 & Rs.517415/-	24-01-2026
11	Jainabi Khwajamainuddin Bepari, Khwajamainoddin Bepari, Dharamanna Padar, /NHL00260034149/ Hubli	Residential Property Bearing Gp No. P8, Property No. 150100202000120330, Measuring East To West: 10 Mtr And North To South: 10Mtr, Total Measuring 100Sq Mtr, Situated At Kaladagi Village, Tq & Dist: Bagalkot Karnataka Pin: 587204. East-Road , West-Plot No. P7, South-Road, North-Plot No. P9	21-10-2025 & Rs.255135/-	24-01-2026
12	Sumithra NR, Boregowda S, Suresh K B, Siddaramu S, Pradip KB, /MA90COLONS 000005007903/ Mysore	All That Piece And Parcel of Property Bearing B. Hosuru Gramapanchayathi Khatha No. 328/328 And As Per Form No.9 And 11 A Unique No. 15210040470042003 Situated At J. Kebbahallu, Mandya Taluk Karnataka Pin: 571446, Within The Jurisdiction of B. Hosuru Gramapanchayathi, Measuring East To West 13.28 Meters And North To South: 10.66 Meters. East-Galli And Land Mariyamma, West-Road, South-Galli And Property of K. N. Boralingegowda, North-Own Site	21-10-2025 & Rs.318757/-	24-01-2026
13	Mamata Harijan, Sreekanth Haraijana, Ahamedbasha Malligae, /MHL00260033071/ Hubli	Residential Gramthana Property Bearing Vpc No.29/1, Property No. 151700202500100029, Total Measuring 299.47Sq Mtr And Building Measuring 299.47Sq Mtr, Situated At Kuntanahosalli Village Within Suraleshwar Gram Panchayat, Tq: Hanagal & Dist: Haveri, Karnataka-581104. East-Property of Hoovakka Parasappa Harijan, West-Property of Maharudrappa Kusanur Rs No., South-Gram Panchayat Road, North-Property of Lalitavva Gadigeppa Harijan	21-10-2025 & Rs.428283/-	24-01-2026
14	Kumara M, Madegowda P, Shivakumar M, /C090COLONS 000005007024/ Mysore	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing No. 31-2-511-22/A, S.A.S. No. 46/A-46/A, Situated At Ward No. 31, Kurabara Beedi, Ramasamudra, Chamarajanagara Town. Measuring: E-W: 4.876810 Meter & N-S: 4.038608 Meter, Karnataka-571342. East-Property of Siddamada & Pathway, West-Property of 'Doreswamy, South-House of Siddegowda, North-House Of Mahesh	21-10-2025 & Rs.502037/-	24-01-2026
15	Madhushree D, Abhisheka U, Geetha V, /MHL00510016414/ Shimoga	All That The Piece or Parcel of Site Along With Structure Standing There On Being Bearing Site/Khatha/Property No. 277, E-Property No. 152400300800101243, Measuring East-West 7.62 Meter X North-South 13.70 Meter, Total 104.39 Sq. Meter, Including 56.16 Sq. Meter Building, Situated At Anandapura Village, Anandapura Village Panchayath, Sagara Taluk, Shivamogga District, Karnataka - 577412. East-Passage Road, West Property of Geetha W/O Umesha, South-Property of Bairapura Ramappa, North-Passage Road	20-10-2025 & Rs.459437/-	24-01-2026
16	Shrirangaiah AH, Manjula R, Hanumantharaju S, /NHL00930025633/ Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Katha No. 188 And E-Katha No. 152500300500320442 Measuring East To West: 12.192 Meters And North To South: 9.144 Meters, Situated At Jampenahalli Village, C.N. Durga Hobil, Koratagere Taluk, Tumkur District, Karnataka - 572129. East-Road, West-Property of Veerabhadraiah, South-Remaining Property, North-Remaining Property	21-10-2025 & Rs.530264/-	24-01-2026
17	Pakkiragouda Hubballi, Annapurna Pakkiragouda Hubballi, Kamalavva Hubbal, /NHL00980028759/ Belgaum	Residential Property Bearing G. P. No. 302/1 Out Of RDPR No. 150400301600100314 Total Measuring 113.12 Sq. Mtrs., I.e., Towards East-West: 3.68 Mtrs. And North-South: 30.74 Mtrs. With Including Built Up Area Measuring: 70.20 Sq Mtrs. Situated At Kukadolli Tq & Dist: Belagavi Within The Limits Of Gram Panchayat Kukadolli And Within The Jurisdiction Of Sub-Registrar Belagavi Tq & Dist: Belagavi Near Bus Stop Belgaum Belgaum Karnataka Pin: 591131 P.O. Kukdolli. East-By Property of Arjun Hubballi, West-By Property of Shivaji Lakmoji, South-By Property of Vithal Dandmani, North-By Government Road	21-10-2025 & Rs.523712/-	24-01-2026
18	Mangalamma N, Sannamma N, Narayana V, Rangaswamy N, /MHL00900027111/ Vivekananda Circle	All That Piece And Parcel of Property Bearing Talakadu Gramapanchayathi Janger No. 861 Property No. 3/480A And As Per Form No. 9 And 11 A Unique No. 152200702010803044 Situated At Talakadu Village, T. Narasipura Taluk, Mysuru District, Within The Jurisdiction of Talakadu Gramapanchayathi Measuring East To West: 4.87 Meters And North To South: 7.01 Meters Main Road Tirumakudal Narsipur Mysore Karnataka Pin: 571122 P.O. Talkod. East-House of Late. Puttaiah, West-Road, South-Site of Sundramma, North Property of Ganesh	21-10-2025 & Rs.355914/-	24-01-2026
19	Padma T, Chaitra R, Rajanna T, /MHL00930026979/ Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Katha No. 28/1 And E-Katha No. 152500703202100191 Measuring East To West: 4.57 Meters And North To South: 12.19 Meters, Situated At Kurubarahalli Village, Bukkapattana Hobil, Sira Taluk, Tumkur District, Under The Limit of Kurubarahalli Gramapanchayathi, Kurubarahalli Village And Post, Sira-572115., Near Main Road Sira Tumkur Karnataka Pin:572115 P.O. Bukkapatna. East-House of Sujatha, West-House of Eranna, South-Road, North-House of Lakshmikanthappa	21-10-2025 & Rs.316879/-	24-01-2026
20	Lakshmi Bai L, Lokesh Naik G, /MHL00920024113/ Vinayanagar Ramnagara	Property No. 50, Pl.D. No. 152900300400300328, Total Measuring 127.09 Sq.meter Including Building Area Measuring 88.26 Sq.meters, Bachenahatti Village, Bachenahalli Grama Panchayth, Magadi Taluk & Ramanagara District, Karnataka-562120. East-Road, West-House of Geethabayi, South-Road, North-Site of Late Rajashekharanayka	21-10-2025 & Rs.453910/-	24-01-2026
21	Ranganath T, Manjula R, Hanumakka T, /NHL00930016842/ Tumkur	Property Bearing Katha No. 61/61, E- Katha No. 152500302201000062, Measuring East To West: 14.9352 Meters And North To South: 6.7056000000000004 Meters, Byragondlu Village, Chinnahalli Gramapanchayithi Kolala Hobli Koratagere Taluk Tumkur Distict, P.O. Pathaganahalli, Tumkur, Karnataka, Pin: 572129. East-Road, West-Property of Aswathaiah, South-Vacant Site, North-Property of Thimmakka	21-10-2025 & Rs.520572/-	24-01-2026
22	Lakshmi S, Shivakumar S, Vikas Gowda S, Nagaraju S, /MHL00930012759/ Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Katha No.111/1 And E-Katha No.152500402000500115, Measuring East To West: 7.0104 Feet And North To South:15.8496, Situated At Singonahalli Village, Huliyurudurga Hobli, Kunigal Taluk, Tumkur District, Karnataka- 572123. East-Joint House of Nagaraju, West-Road, South-15 Feet Galli, North-Own Remaining	21-10-2025 & Rs.402170/-	24-01-2026

Date: 29th January 2026 | Place: KARNATAKA **Sd/- Authorised Officer Manappuram Home Finance Ltd**

GUJARAT JAIL REFORM

'Vikasdeep': Prisoners' children feted for govt job success

AHMEDABAD

Ahmedabad Central Jail hosted a felicitation ceremony on Wednesday under the Gujarat government's Vikasdeep scheme, recognising the children of inmates who excelled in competitive exams and secured government jobs.

The event aimed to motivate children to pursue education and build stable careers despite the challenges of having incarcerated family members.

Gujarat DGP K.L.N. Rao presented cash awards and certificates to two recipients. One awardee, son of inmate Rajendrasinh Jadeja, became an Unarmed Police Constable. The other, son of released convict Surasang Solanki, was appointed as a Junior Clerk in the Gujarat Food and Civil Supplies Department in Surat. Each received Rs 15,001, a memento, and a certificate of appreciation.

Addressing the gathering, DGP Rao said prisons are not only centres of punishment but also schools of reform. He emphasised that the prison department actively supports inmates' children to progress through education and competitive exams, creating brighter futures. Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi guided the programme, and senior prison officials, including Inspector General of Prisons and Ahmedabad Jail Superintendent Gaurav Agrawal, attended.

The ceremony highlighted broader welfare efforts by the state prison department. Under the 'Ek Nai Ummeed' scheme, 57 inmates received Rs 74,057 for passing Class 10, 12, and higher exams in August 2024. Incentives for children of convicted inmates included Rs 54,038 for 39 children in November 2024, Rs 47,538 for 38 children in June 2025, and Rs 11,500 for 10 children in January 2026.

The initiative reinforces the state's commitment to provide moral and material support to inmates' families while encouraging education, skill development, and professional growth among children of prisoners.

QUICK READ

Magnitude 6 quake hits Moro Gulf Philippines

Manila

A 6.0 magnitude earthquake struck the Moro Gulf in the Philippines on Wednesday, the National Center of Seismology (NCS) reported. The tremor occurred at a depth of 40 km at 12:17 PM IST. The Philippines lies along the Pacific Ring of Fire, where the Philippine Sea and Eurasian tectonic plates meet. Experts say earthquakes in the region are caused by stress along these plates. Offshore quakes may lift the seafloor, sometimes triggering tsunamis that affect nearby coasts.

Explosion derails Jaffar Express in Sindh Province

Karachi

An explosion hit the Jaffar Express in Sindh on Monday, derailing four train coaches, officials said. The blast occurred near Abad railway station as the train traveled from Quetta to Sukkur. A Baloch armed group claimed responsibility. The Jaffar Express, which connects Quetta, Punjab, and Peshawar, has faced repeated attacks in the past year. Authorities have increased security, adding special coaches for military personnel, but no details on casualties were released at the time of reporting.

Baloch reports new enforced disappearances

Quetta

Families in Balochistan and Karachi report fresh enforced disappearances, blaming Pakistani security forces. Several young men were allegedly taken from Gwadar, Kharan, Quetta, Khuzdar, Turbat, Panjgur, and Karachi during separate operations. In Jiwani, two brothers remain missing after a raid. In Quetta, a doctor, student, and teacher were reportedly detained. Raids in Khuzdar involved alleged assaults on women, leaving children traumatised. The whereabouts of those taken from their homes are still unknown, raising concerns among local communities and human rights groups.

Washington Senate officially honours India's R-Day

Bill Gates praised India's innovations, while the Consul General led Republic Day celebrations in Seattle with cultural performances

WASHINGTON

In an exceptional gesture in honour of India's 77th Republic Day, Washington State Senate convened a special session and adopted Resolution Number 8674 celebrating the Republic Day of India.

The Senate Resolution was piloted by Indian-American Washington State Senator Manka Dhingra and also supported from the floor of the Senate by another Indian-origin State Senator Vandana Slatter.

The resolution acknowledged India's strong traditions of democracy, the contributions of the large Indian-American population in the State and the role of Indian Consulate in Seattle in fostering a stronger multifaceted relationship with the State.

Shared priorities like agriculture, trade, technology, and emerging technologies were also emphasised. To mark the occasion, the Consulate General of India hosted a reception at the State Capitol, attended by senators, representatives, and dignitaries, with cultural performances celebrating India.

Other Northwest states, including Alaska, Nebraska, Oregon, and South Dakota, also issued proclamations recognising India's Republic Day. Montana Governor Greg Gianforte praised Indian Americans' contributions to the state's cultural, educational, and economic life. South Dakota Governor Larry Rhoden and Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen highlighted strong US–India relations and shared values.

Bill Gates lauded India's global impact in health, agriculture, digital infrastructure, and AI innovation. US Representative Kim Schrier conveyed Republic Day greetings and wished for continued friendship between the peoples of India and Washington.

In Seattle, the Consul General unfurled the Indian tricolor atop the Federal Reserve building, attended by Mayor Katie Wilson and a Montana delegation. The programme featured patriotic poems and a Kuchipudi dance performance. A later evening reception at Bell Harbor Conference Center recognised six newly elected Indian American city council members for public service. Cultural exhibits representing all 28 Indian states were displayed, and the newly co-located offices of the Indian Consular Application Centre were inaugurated, providing streamlined consular services in a single location.

Saudi Crown Prince rejects military action against Iran

RIYADH

'Saudi Arabia will not allow its airspace or territory to be used for attacks on Iran, emphasizing dialogue and regional stability'

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman stated on Tuesday that the Kingdom will not permit any military actions against Iran from its airspace or territory, amid reports of a US naval buildup in the region. The Crown Prince made the remarks during a phone call with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, who updated him on Iran's nuclear talks and domestic developments.

The Crown Prince stressed that Saudi Arabia respects Iran's sovereignty and supports resolving disputes through dialogue to maintain regional security and stability. "The Kingdom will not allow attacks or military operations against Iran from any party, regardless of origin". Iran's President thanked the Crown Prince for his commitment to peace.

The statement comes as US President Donald Trump highlighted a growing US military presence near Iran, describing an "armada floating beautifully toward Iran," while leaving the possibility of negotiations open. Tensions remain high amid ongoing nationwide protests in Iran over economic hardship, inflation, and governance issues.

Human Rights Activist News Agency (HRANA) reports that after 31 days of unrest, 6,221 people have died, including 5,858 protesters and 100 children. Over 42,000 individuals have been arrested, more than 11,000 severely injured, and 261 forced confessions were publicly broadcast. Protests have been recorded in 201 cities across 31 provinces, with 656 related incidents documented.

Saudi Arabia's stance reflects a focus on diplomacy and dialogue while urging respect for Iran's sovereignty, even as international military movements and domestic unrest continue to escalate tensions in the region.

Protests erupt in Karachi after activist Mazari sentenced

KARACHI

Human rights activist Imaan Mazari and her husband, lawyer Hadi Ali Chattha, were sentenced to a total of 17 years in prison under Pakistan's Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), sparking widespread protests in Karachi. Demonstrators raised concerns over freedom of expression, civil liberties, and the use of cybercrime laws to silence dissent.

Mazari and Chattha were convicted for allegedly posting "anti-state" content on social media between 2021 and 2025, with the court claiming the posts promoted narratives against the state and accused the military of terrorism. The sentences, given on three separate counts, will run concurrently. Both maintain their innocence, calling the case politically motivated due to their criticism of enforced disappearances.

Protests were joined by journalists, lawyers, and civil society activists, who demanded the repeal of PECA and the immediate withdrawal of the sentences. Journalist Saeed Baloch argued that PECA violates constitutional rights, undermining free speech, writing, and peaceful assembly. Rights activist Qazi Khizer said Mazari's case reflects a broader trend of targeting advocates for legal rights and constitutional protections.

Japanese Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi will meet South Korean counterpart Ahn Gyu Back to boost security cooperation

Japan Defence Minister To Meet South Korean Counterpart

TOKYO

Japanese Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi is scheduled to meet South Korean Defence Minister Ahn Gyu Back in Yokosuka on January 30, aiming to strengthen bilateral ties and address regional security challenges. The meeting will take place at Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force base, according to South Korea's Defence Ministry.

The talks come amid rising tensions over North Korea's missile and nuclear programme. On Tuesday, North Korea launched two ballistic missiles toward the Sea of Japan. One missile reached an altitude of about 80 kilometres and flew roughly 350 kilometres. South Korea's military detected the launches from northern Pyongyang. Japanese officials confirmed that the missiles fell outside Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone, and no damage was reported. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi ordered authorities to ensure the safety of vessels and aircraft following the launches.

Koizumi's discussions with Ahn are expected to emphasise the importance of cooperation in responding to threats from North Korea, including missile and nuclear developments. Strengthening personal relations between the two ministers is also a key objective, promoting smoother communication and trust.

Earlier this month, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung visited Japan and met with Prime Minister Takaichi. Lee stressed that cooperation between Japan and South Korea is vital amid a complex international environment. He highlighted six decades of bilateral relations since normalisation and expressed hope for further collaboration in the future. Takaichi welcomed the partnership, emphasising efforts to enhance regional stability and strengthen ties between the two countries.

The Yokosuka meeting is expected to build on recent diplomatic engagements and foster closer coordination on defence and security matters, reinforcing the importance of regional cooperation in East Asia.

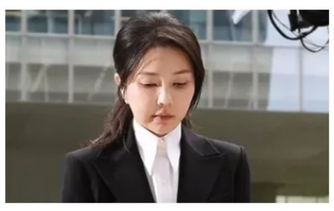
Bribery: S. Korea's ex-first lady jailed for 20 months

SEOUL

A South Korean court on Wednesday sentenced former First Lady Kim Keon Hee to 20 months in prison for accepting luxury gifts from the Unification Church in exchange for business favours. The Seoul Central District Court acquitted her of stock manipulation and Political Funds Act violations. She was also ordered to forfeit 12.8 million won ($9,000).

The ruling makes Kim and her husband, former President Yoon Suk Yeol, the first former presidential couple in South Korea to receive prison sentences with criminal convictions. Yoon has already been sentenced to five years for charges related to his 2024 martial law attempt.

The court found Kim guilty of accepting a Chanel bag and Graff necklace in July 2022 from a Unification Church official seeking business favours. Another Chanel bag she received in April 2022 was not considered a bribe, as no requests were made. "The defendant misused her position to seek profit and failed to reject high-end luxury goods," the court said.



Kim had also been charged with conspiring to manipulate stock prices of Deutsch Motors, and receiving free opinion polls before the 2022 election, but the court ruled she did not benefit economically or participate as an accomplice.

The special counsel said it will appeal the verdict, describing it as difficult to accept, while Kim's lawyers indicated they are considering next steps. Kim has been in custody since August 2025 and denied all charges, which included involvement with a shaman to obtain gifts worth 80 million won.

The case highlights ongoing scrutiny of political figures in South Korea and the legal consequences of corruption and influence through high-value gifts.

Adani, Embraer sign pact to manufacture aircraft in India

SÃO PAULO

Indian conglomerate Adani Group and Brazilian aircraft maker Embraer announced a strategic agreement on Tuesday to manufacture aircraft in India, strengthening the country's aerospace sector.

The two companies plan to set up an aircraft assembly line in India and collaborate across multiple areas of the aviation value chain. The partnership will include pilot training, aircraft maintenance, and development of technical and engineering skills, supporting both domestic needs and industry growth. Financial details of the agreement were not disclosed.

In a joint statement, Adani and Embraer said the initiative aims to enhance India's technological and manufacturing capabilities while creating direct and indirect jobs. Embraer is a global leader in regional jets, executive planes, and military aircraft. The Adani Group has a strong presence in infrastructure, airports, defence, and energy, making the collaboration significant for India's role in global aerospace supply chains.

Industry experts see the agreement as part of India's strategy to attract foreign investment, promote high-value manufacturing, and reduce dependence on imports. The project aligns with government initiatives such as "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat," especially in defence and civil aviation.

The collaboration also reflects the growing globalisation of the aerospace industry, as manufacturers seek new markets and cost-efficient production hubs. For India, the pact marks another step in becoming a competitive destination for advanced aircraft manufacturing, skill development, and technological innovation, reinforcing the country's ambition to emerge as a global aviation hub.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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2		5	3		7		4	
8		7		1		3		9
	1		7		3		9	
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7		3	4		1	6		
	8			7			3	4
	7		8		9	5		
5		9		3			6	

8	5	3	7	1	2	6	4	9
1	9	6	4	8	5	2	3	7
2	7	4	9	3	6	1	8	5
7	6	9	8	5	3	4	1	2
3	2	5	1	4	7	9	6	8
4	8	1	6	2	9	5	7	3
5	4	8	2	7	1	3	9	6
6	3	7	5	9	4	8	2	1
9	1	2	3	6	8	7	5	4

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

FORCED MARRIAGE

Minor Christian girl forcibly converted, married

ISLAMABAD

A 13-year-old Christian girl from Sahiwal, Punjab, was allegedly abducted, forcibly converted to Islam, and married off, raising serious human rights concerns. The Voice of Pakistan Minority (VOPM) reported the girl, a sixth-grade student, had no ability to consent to these life-altering actions.

Her parents are disabled and poor, relying on daily earnings from small jobs. The mother suffered a leg fracture, and the father works selling eggs. The family says they feel powerless, and the girl's disappearance has caused immense distress.

Community members and VOPM criticised the incident as a severe violation of children's and human rights. According to reports, the alleged abductor is Ali Haider, from the Muslim Jatt community. After taking the girl, he reportedly forced her conversion to Islam and coerced her into marriage.

Days have passed without progress in recovering the girl, while the family faces repeated threats, reportedly intended to intimidate them from seeking legal help. VOPM stated, "It is cruelty layered on cruelty: first, the child is taken, then the parents are threatened. Fear becomes a cage for struggling families."

Human rights activists say forced conversion for marriage occurs where power is unequal and perpetrators feel no accountability. VOPM urged Pakistani authorities to act immediately to rescue the girl, ensure her safety, protect her family from threats, and conduct a transparent legal investigation. The body emphasised that this must be treated as a serious crime against a minor, not a private matter to be ignored or suppressed.

The case highlights ongoing vulnerabilities of religious minorities and children in Pakistan, and the urgent need for stronger protections and enforcement of laws to prevent exploitation and abuse.

Malaysian football chiefs resign over naturalization scandal

FAM leadership steps aside after FIFA sanctions over forged documents scandal

KUALA LUMPUR

The entire executive committee of the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) resigned on Wednesday following a major scandal involving the naturalization of seven foreign-born players, a controversy that led to FIFA sanctions and raised serious questions about governance in Malaysian football.

All committee members, elected just 11 months ago for the 2025–2029 term, stepped down with immediate effect in what FAM described as a unanimous and voluntary decision aimed at protecting the association's credibility and integrity.

The mass resignation followed FIFA's ruling last September that fined FAM about $450,000 and suspended the seven players for one year after concluding that fake documents had been submitted to

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support their eligibility. The players — Facundo Garcés, Rodrigo Holgado, Imanol Machuca, João Figueiredo, Gabriel Palmero, Jon Irazabal and Héctor Hevel — were also individually fined.

The footballers, hailing from Argentina, Brazil, the Netherlands and Spain, had represented Malaysia in international matches, including a successful 2027 Asian Cup qualifier against Vietnam. Malaysian officials initially maintained the players were eligible under FIFA rules, claiming each had a Malaysian-born grandparent. FIFA investigators, however, said original documents obtained from the players' countries of origin contradicted those claims.

In a statement, FAM said resigning after just 11 months into a four-year mandate underscored that service to Malaysian football outweighed holding office. The move, it said, was intended to safeguard the association's reputation and allow FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) to conduct a comprehensive review of governance, administrative and procedural matters without distraction.

"The executive committee recognizes the importance of collective responsibility," FAM said, stressing the need to restore confidence among supporters and stakeholders.

Acting FAM president Mohamad Yusoff Mahadi said secretary-general Noor Azman Rahman would oversee daily operations, with a congress expected to be convened to appoint new leadership. Meanwhile, the Court of Arbitration for Sport has temporarily lifted FIFA's ban on the players while an appeal is reviewed.

Prass stunner fires Hoffenheim to win as Leipzig slip late at St Pauli

BERLIN

A stunning long-range strike from Alexander Prass helped Hoffenheim tighten their grip on third place in the Bundesliga with a gritty 2-0 victory away at Werder Bremen, while RB Leipzig were held to a dramatic 1-1 draw at St Pauli after conceding a late penalty.

Hoffenheim, who narrowly avoided relegation last season, continued their remarkable resurgence with goals from Prass and Grischa Proemel, extending their strong run to just one defeat in the last 13 league matches. The win keeps them in the Champions League places, three points behind Borussia Dortmund.

Prass broke Bremen's resistance just before halftime with a spectacular long-range effort that flew past the goalkeeper, underlining Hoffenheim's confidence and attacking intent. Their task became tougher early in the second half when Wouter Burger was sent off following a VAR review for a dangerous challenge.

Despite being reduced to 10 men, Hoffenheim maintained their intensity and doubled their lead just two minutes later. Proemel reacted quickest to

Hoffenheim strengthen Champions League push while Leipzig drop points after stoppage-time penalty

a rebound from a Vladimir Coufal cross to finish from close range and effectively seal the contest. Bremen thought they had a lifeline when Romano Schmid produced a clever backheel, but the effort was ruled out for a narrow offside.

"The numbers don't come from nothing," Proemel told. "We play intense football and run so much. We know the Champions League is still a long way away, but we have to keep this up."

In Hamburg, Leipzig appeared set to claim all three points when Yan Diomande's deflected strike gave them a 66th-minute lead — their first-ever goal at St Pauli's Millerntor Stadium. However, deep into stoppage time, captain David Raum slipped and fouled Martijn Kaars in the box. The forward converted the resulting penalty to earn St Pauli a vital point in their relegation battle.

"For us it's extremely unlucky, but it's a penalty," Leipzig midfielder Christoph Baumgartner admitted.

Both matches had been rescheduled from early January due to severe winter weather, with the final delayed fixture set for early March.

Mourinho praises former player Arbeloa ahead of Champions League meeting with Real Madrid

Real Madrid's Alvaro Arbeloa like one of my 'children', says Jose Mourinho

LISBON

Benfica coach Jose Mourinho has described Real Madrid manager Alvaro Arbeloa as "one of my children", insisting he holds nothing but admiration and affection for his former player.

Mourinho coached Arbeloa during his spell at Real Madrid between 2010 and 2013, a period marked by intense pressure and dressing-room divisions. The Portuguese tactician said his recent comments about being surprised by inexperienced coaches leading major European clubs were misunderstood and were never intended as criticism of Arbeloa, who recently replaced Xabi Alonso at the Madrid helm.

"There is one problem — both Arbeloa and Cristian Chivu are my children," Mourinho said at a news con-

ference. "They are not just ex-players of mine, they are special. From a human point of view, Alvaro is one of my favourites. He may not be the greatest player in Real Madrid's history, but he is one of the best men I've coached."

Mourinho explained that his remarks stemmed from personal experience, recalling how he himself was unexpectedly appointed Benfica coach in 2000. "The last thing I would do is put pressure on him," the 63-year-old said. "I want everything to go well for him and for him to have a fantastic coaching career."

The veteran manager added that he has not spoken to Arbeloa since his appointment but felt no need to. "He knows I wish him luck. No call is necessary," Mourinho said, acknowledging that while both coaches want to win on the night, mutual respect remains intact.

Mourinho admitted he could not yet judge Arbeloa's coaching qualities, having not closely followed Madrid's youth or reserve sides, but stressed that personal happiness was what mattered most. "Coaching today is a very difficult mission," he noted. Arbeloa, for his part, said he was "emotional and proud" to hear Mourinho's words, calling the Portuguese manager a great friend and mentor. Real Madrid can secure qualification for the last 16 with a win, while Benfica must triumph and rely on other results to stay alive in the competition.

Rohit Sharma pins T20 World Cup hopes on Arshdeep, Hardik

NEW DELHI

Former T20 World Cup-winning captain Rohit Sharma has identified left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh and all-rounder Hardik Pandya as pivotal to India's success in the upcoming tournament. Highlighting Arshdeep's prowess with the new ball and at the death, Rohit praised his ability to swing the ball and take crucial wickets early and late in the innings. He also stressed Hardik's dual role as a finisher and versatile bowler, which provides balance to the side. Rohit underscored the importance of tactical team selection, especially managing Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy together, while advising spinners like Kuldeep to use DRS reviews judiciously. India, defending champions, are favorites in the February–March event across India and Sri Lanka, with their deep batting and bowling lineup offering a strong edge.

Inter Milan a more complete, modern side under Chivu: Dortmund coach Kovac

DORTMUND

Borussia Dortmund coach Niko Kovac believes Inter Milan have evolved into a stronger and more balanced team under Cristian Chivu as the two sides prepare to meet in the Champions League.

Speaking ahead of the high-

stakes clash, Kovac said Inter — finalists in 2023 and 2025 — have retained the hallmarks of traditional Italian football while adding greater pace and adaptability to their game. The Serie A leaders currently sit five points clear domestically and are again among the favourites in Europe. "Inter have maintained the best elements of Italian football, but they've become very modern," Kovac said. "In the past they were dominant in possession, but now they've added a very quick transition game. We need to be aware of that."

Inter impressed last season on their run to the final under former coach Simone Inzaghi before being outclassed 5-0 by Paris Saint-Germain in Munich. Under Chivu, Kovac feels the side has become more dynamic. "Usually you say Italian teams are technical but a bit slower. At the moment, this Inter side is very fast, very modern and very well organised," he added.

Dortmund head into the final league-phase match on 11 points, one fewer than Inter. A win could see either side qualify directly for the last 16, though Dortmund would also need favourable results elsewhere. The German club were Champions League runners-up two years ago, while Inter lost the 2023 final to Manchester City.

"You can see they've been together for a few years and everyone knows what their teammate is doing," Kovac said. Dortmund will be without injured Niklas Süle and Marcel Sabitzer, while Chelsea loanee Aaron Anselmino has been recalled. Inter, meanwhile, will miss Nicolo Barella due to a muscle injury, though Chivu confirmed captain Lautaro Martinez is likely to feature. Inter began their European campaign with four straight wins but have since lost three matches in a row. "We're facing a very strong team that rarely loses at home," Chivu said, noting Dortmund have lost just once in their last 21 Champions League home games.

Hadjar crashes new Red Bull car in wet Barcelona pre-season test

BARCELONA

Red Bull's pre-season preparations hit an early snag after new signing Isack Hadjar crashed during private testing at the Circuit de Catalunya in Barcelona. The 21-year-old Frenchman lost control of the RB22 in wet conditions at the final corner, spinning into the barriers during a closed-door afternoon session. The incident forced Red Bull to halt running and review its test programme.

Team principal Laurent Mekies said the priority was assessing the damage and ensuring Hadjar was unharmed, before deciding on further running. With only three days scheduled at Barcelona and two already used, Red Bull may delay additional track time until repairs are complete.

The crash followed a productive dry-running day on Monday, where Hadjar completed significant mileage. Only Red Bull and Ferrari tested on Tuesday due to poor weather, with Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton completing extensive wet laps. Pre-season mileage is crucial ahead of Formula One's new 2026 engine regulations.

Tata Steel Masters: Gukesh loses, Arjun draws quickly

WIJK AAN ZEE

Indian players had mixed results as the Tata Steel Masters progressed on Wednesday. World champion D Gukesh's struggles continued with a ninth-round loss to Germany's Matthias Bluebaum, while Arjun Erigaisi settled for a quick draw against American Hans Moke Niemann, leaving the Indians mid-table.

Gukesh, playing White, chose the Bishop's Opening but gained little. Bluebaum seized the initiative, trapped Gukesh's light-squared bishop and won exchange for a piece before converting smoothly, forcing resignation on move 37. Gukesh stays on four points, level with Praggnanandhaa and Arjun.

Top seed Arjun tried to complicate matters in an English Opening, but Niemann defended accurately and repeated moves after 22.

Uzbek leader Nodirbek Abdusattorov drew with Javokhir Sindarov to remain first on six points. Sindarov shares second with Jorden van Foreest and 14-year-old Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus, who won again.

Palmer going nowhere, insists Rosenior as Chelsea dismiss United links

NAPLES

Chelsea head coach Liam Rosenior has firmly dismissed speculation linking Cole Palmer with a move away from Stamford Bridge, calling reports of interest from Manchester United "unrealistic" and insisting the England international remains happy at the club.

The 23-year-old attacking midfielder, a Manchester native, joined Chelsea from Manchester City in 2023 and quickly emerged as the club's standout performer across his first two seasons in London. Recent reports suggested Palmer could be tempted by a return to the north of England and a move to the club he supported as a boy, but Rosenior was unequivocal in his response.

Chelsea boss labels Cole Palmer exit talk unrealistic ahead of crucial Napoli clash

Asked ahead of Chelsea's Champions League trip to Napoli whether Palmer was "untouchable" and content at the club, Rosenior replied: "Yes and yes. It's simple. I'm not surprised at the timing. A new manager comes in and all of a sudden there are people looking to unsettle. It's not true." "There's no reason for an assurance," he added. "It's so unrealistic. It's come from nowhere, there's nothing in it. There's no reason to have the conversation."

Palmer's influence this season has been curtailed by recurring injury issues. He has managed five goals and no assists in 13 appearances across all competitions, while an ongoing groin problem forced him to miss Chelsea's last two matches. However, he has been included in the squad that travelled to Italy, offering Rosenior a timely boost.

Chelsea currently sit eighth in the Champions League table and are likely to require a win in Naples to secure direct qualification for the last 16 via a top-eight finish. The Blues face familiar opposition in Napoli coach Antonio Conte, the last man to guide Chelsea to Premier League glory in the 2016–17 season.

Despite Napoli's struggles — the Serie A champions have won just two of their opening seven European matches — Rosenior expects a stern test. "The results haven't followed the performances that Antonio's team have given," he said. "We know it's going to be a very difficult game in a very special atmosphere."

Delhi Dangal Warriors overpower Tiigers of Mumbai to stay alive in semifinals race

NEW DELHI

Delhi Dangal Warriors kept their Pro Wrestling League 2026 semifinal hopes alive with a commanding 6–3 victory over Tiigers of Mumbai Dangals in Match 13.

In an action-packed encounter, Delhi produced dominant performances across categories to claim two crucial match points. The win takes them to four points from four matches, placing them fifth on the standings and firmly in contention for the knockout stage. Mumbai, meanwhile, ended their PWL 2026 campaign without registering a single team victory.

Delhi's success was built on wins by Turan Bayramov, Anjli, Anastasiya Alpyeeva, Karla Godinez Gonzalez, captain Sujeet Kalkal and Ronak. Tiigers of Mumbai Dangals managed three individual wins through Jyoti Sihag, Mukul Dahiya and a forfeit in the final bout, but the damage had already been done.

Anastasiya Alpyeeva was named Player of the Match for her emphatic performance, while Jyoti Sihag earned the Fighter of the Match award for her spirited comeback win despite her team's defeat.

Delhi set the early tone in the 74kg men's bout as Bayramov edged past Deepak in a tight tactical contest, using superior mat control and decisive push-outs to seal the win. The momentum continued in the 62kg women's category, where Anjli produced an aggressive display to defeat Olha Padoshyk 19–10, highlighted by two four-point throws during the Power Minute.

The lead was extended further when Anastasiya Alpyeeva secured a swift fall against Jyoti Berwal in the 76kg women's bout. Captain Sujeet Kalkal then underlined Delhi's dominance with a controlled 9–2 victory over Ali Rahimzade in the 65kg men's category, taking the scoreline to 5–0.

Mumbai finally responded through Jyoti Sihag in the 53kg women's bout and Mukul Dahiya in the 86kg men's contest, but Delhi had already sealed the tie.

With one match remaining, Delhi Dangal Warriors remain in the hunt for a semifinal berth, while Tiigers of Mumbai Dangals bow out of the season winless.

QUICK READ

Govt eyes higher spending in Budget 2026-27

New Delhi

The government may raise capital spending by about 10 per cent in the Union Budget for 2026-27, an SBI report said on Wednesday. Total capex could cross Rs 12 lakh crore, higher than last year. The move may boost large projects in roads, railways, ports and power, helping growth and jobs. The report added that despite global uncertainty and rising debt, India's recovery after the pandemic remains strong and disciplined.

India growth remains strong amid global churn

New Delhi

Aditya Birla Group Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla said on Wednesday that India's steady economic growth stands out in a world facing political tension and changing trade rules. In his seventh 'Annual Reflections' note, he said India shows strength despite global uncertainty. He added that growth is driven by a large population, fast infrastructure building, a more formal economy and rising ambition. Birla said India offers size, trust and continuity for businesses.

India M&A deal value jumps 42% in 2025

New Delhi

India's mergers and acquisitions deal value rose 42 per cent to $113 billion in 2025, a Bain & Company report said on Wednesday. Strong domestic deals formed about 60 per cent of the total value, while inbound deals jumped over 300 per cent from last year. Foreign investors focused mainly on financial services and technology. Stable economic conditions, favourable population trends and low costs supported activity. Outbound deals also grew 83 per cent to $24 billion.

Budget 2026 to priorities on bolstering defence, critical sectors

Market expectations remain cautious as policymakers weigh growth support against fiscal discipline and global uncertainty

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is all set to present the Union Budget for the financial year 2026-27 on February 1. It is expected to balance growth needs with fiscal discipline amid global uncertainty.

Market experts believe that the upcoming budget will place a strong emphasis on emerging priority sectors that can drive long-term growth and strategic resilience.

A recent report said the budget will give more attention to defence, critical minerals, power, electronics, infrastructure and affordable housing. It noted that policymakers must support growth while keeping government spending under control in a difficult global climate. Motilal Oswal Financial Services said even small and focused steps could lift market confidence.

Investors are not expecting big announcements, as the finance minister is dealing with many economic and political challenges. Because of this, the base of expectations is low, leaving room for positive surprises. The report said the role of the budget has narrowed over time due to several steps taken outside the budget. As a result, stock markets will look for targeted measures that support key sectors and improve investor mood.

The government has stayed firm on fiscal discipline, with the deficit falling sharply from pandemic highs. The fiscal deficit has reduced from 9.2 per cent during Covid to an estimated 4.4 per cent in FY26. The report expects this cautious approach to broadly continue in the coming financial year. However, it does not fully rule out a small and practical rise in spending if needed.

Such steps may find market approval if funds are channelled into productive capital projects. Experts say consumption support will stay limited, as earlier tax relief is still taking effect. Hence, the 2026 budget is likely to stress capital spending on defence, infrastructure, power and strategic sectors, seen as crucial for security, jobs, stability and long-term growth.

BUDGET TO BALANCE DEFICIT REDUCTION, GROWTH

NEW DELHI: As Budget 2026 approaches, policymakers face tough choices to cut deficits while protecting growth momentum.

India gears up for the Union Budget 2026-27, with the government under pressure to reduce the fiscal deficit without hurting investment-led growth, an EY report said. The fiscal deficit is pegged at 4.4% of GDP in FY26, and may be guided towards 4.0% in FY27.

EY noted that slower nominal GDP growth and weak tax collections have reduced policy flexibility. Government capital spending has become the key growth driver, rising over 28% during April-November FY26, while private investment remains cautious amid global uncertainty. Any sharp cut in capital spending could weaken growth when external demand is already soft.

On the revenue side, options remain limited. Gross tax revenue growth slowed sharply, with indirect taxes falling and direct tax growth easing after reforms. Nominal GDP growth is estimated at just 8% in FY26, making deficit control harder.

Given these limits, EY expects capital expenditure to be protected in FY27, while savings are sought in revenue spending such as subsidies and administration. Higher non-tax income, including RBI dividends, and disinvestment may help bridge gaps. The Budget is likely to stress quality of consolidation, supporting infrastructure while slowly trimming consumption spending. EY said success will depend on sustaining growth and outlining a credible path towards the 3% fiscal deficit goal over the medium term. This approach aims to reassure investors, manage debt levels, and keep India resilient amid global economic uncertainty while giving policymakers room to respond to shocks and maintain long term fiscal credibility in an evolving international environment marked by volatility and shifting growth patterns.

Global trade faces uncertainty from tariffs, tech

NEW DELHI

Global trade is entering 2026 at a turning point, with policy choices and geopolitics shaping flows more than demand, HSBC Global Research said. After a volatile yet resilient 2025, the outlook shows tension between rising trade barriers and new connections. United States tariff policy remains a key uncertainty, with sector specific duties expected to stay. Even paused tariff threats have unsettled markets and changed trade behaviour.

HSBC said front loading of US imports in early 2025 has reversed, causing weaker trade flows and slower export growth in 2026. Global export volumes are expected to grow about 2 percent, down from 3.8 percent last year. Better performance is likely in Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

Competition for critical minerals is also rising. China's strong position in rare earths has pushed the US, Europe and allies to diversify supply chains. While new partnerships are forming, building alternatives will take time and heavy investment.

Trade agreements offer some relief. With reduced access to US markets, many countries are pursuing new bilateral and regional deals. Agreements involving the EU, India, the UK and emerging markets may support trade, though overlapping rules add complexity.

Technology is another driver. Artificial intelligence linked goods have powered recent trade growth, while digital services are set for long term gains. However, reliance on AI sectors also creates risks if investment slows. HSBC said global trade in 2026 will depend on how nations balance barriers, cooperation and technology in a fragmented world. Business strategies and coordination will be crucial during this transition.

Kerala economy posts strong growth with GSDP rise

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala's economy grew steadily in 2024-25, recording a 6.19 per cent increase in Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in real terms, the Economic Review 2025 by the Kerala State Planning Board said.

The GSDP rose to Rs 6,85,28,316 lakh from Rs 6,45,31,002 lakh in 2023-24. At current prices, GSDP growth was 9.97 per cent, while Gross State Value Added (GSVA) grew 6.59 per cent in real terms.

Kerala remains among India's top ten states in per capita GSDP, which increased 5.67 per cent to Rs 1,90,149. The services sector continues to dominate the economy, while the secondary sector grew 7.87 per cent and the primary sector 2.36 per cent. Within the primary sector, agriculture and allied activities grew 2.14 per cent, while fishing and aquaculture expanded 10.55 per cent.

Fiscal management remained prudent. The fiscal deficit rose marginally to 3.86 per cent of GSDP, with revenue deficit at 2.49 per cent. Total revenue receipts increased slightly to Rs 1,24,861.07 crore, though central transfers fell 6.15 per cent. State own revenue rose 2.7 per cent, with tax revenue up 3.1 per cent.

Expenditure growth was strong, with total spending rising 9 per cent, revenue expenditure up 9.3 per cent, and capital spending growing 8.96 per cent.

Land use data shows Kerala's total geographical area is 38.86 lakh ha, with 64.71 per cent cropped and 27.8 per cent forest. Coconut accounts for 30.44 per cent of cropped area, rubber 21.78 per cent, plantation crops 28.22 per cent, and rice 7.01 per cent.

The review highlights steady sectoral growth, strong fiscal management, and continued infrastructure and policy support as key factors driving Kerala's resilient economy into 2025-26.

It will be a one-stop hub to support Indian talent moving to Europe; will assist Indian workers in securing employment opportunities in European countries.

EU sets up legal gateway office in India to support workforce mobility

MUMBAI

India and the European Union (EU) have announced a historic free-trade agreement (FTA), dubbed the "mother of all deals" by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

The EU President announced that they are launching the first EU legal gateway office in India. It will be a one-stop hub to support Indian talent moving to Europe. The EU legal gateway office in India will assist Indian workers in securing employment opportunities in European countries.

"The agreement establishes two benefits for India because it improves workforce mobility while providing European economies with access to Indian professionals who have specialized skills needed for their €18 trillion market," says Sanjay Laul, Founder of MSM Unify.

One-stop hub to provide info, support

- The EU legal gateway office in India will act as a one-stop hub to provide information and support the movement of workers, starting with the Information and Communication Technology, popularly called the ICT sector.
- The EU has reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing collaboration on safe, regular, and orderly migration, including through circular pathways, for highly skilled workers, students, researchers, and seasonal workers in shortage occupations.
- At the end of 2024, a total of 931,607 Indian citizens resided in the EU, the largest group (20.8%) for Blue Card holders (16,268 in 2024). An EU Blue Card allows highly-qualified workers from outside the EU the right to live and work in an EU Member State, provided they meet qualifications and salary requirements. The EU Blue Card applies in 25 of the 27 EU Member States. It does not apply in Denmark and Ireland.

Liquidity injection fails to ease market stress

NEW DELHI

Despite a record liquidity push of Rs 5.5 lakh crore by the Reserve Bank of India, markets have shown uneven response, SBI Research's latest Ecowrap report highlighted. The RBI has reduced the repo rate by 125 basis points and conducted unprecedented liquidity operations during FY26, yet bond and money market yields have not softened proportionately.

SBI Research said total net liquidity, factoring in CRR measures, buy-sell swaps, and currency leakage, reached Rs 5.5 lakh crore—the highest ever in India's monetary history. While bank lending rates adjusted relatively quickly, as nearly 65 per cent of floating-rate loans follow the external benchmark lending rate, money markets and government securities have not mirrored the easing.

Short-term instruments like commercial papers and certificates of deposit initially declined but firmed up from August 2025. Similarly, 10-year AAA corporate bond yields, after falling until early June, increased later, reflecting higher risk premia. The asymmetry is even more visible in State Development Loans, where borrowing costs largely remained unchanged during April-December 2025 despite large liquidity support.

To address this, SBI suggested the RBI conduct open market operations in more liquid benchmark securities instead of illiquid papers, improving yield-curve signalling and term premia management. The report emphasised evolving OMO strategies into stronger tools for guiding market expectations, boosting investor confidence, and ensuring smoother transmission of policy easing across all debt market segments.

SBI concluded that while the liquidity push is unprecedented, innovation in liquidity management and signalling is essential to ensure effective monetary policy transmission in India's complex and evolving financial markets.

ACC posts record profit, highest cement volumes ever

AHMEDABAD

Cement giant ACC Limited, part of the Adani Group, reported a stellar performance for Q3 FY26, with net profit surging 346% on a normalised basis to Rs 380 crore year-on-year. Revenue rose 22% to Rs 6,483 crore, while cement volumes reached a record 11.3 million tonnes, up 15% from last year.

Vinod Bahety, CEO of ACC, said the growth was driven by strong trade and premium cement sales along with expansion in ready-mix concrete (RMX), which boosted realisations and strengthened market share. The company is moving forward with the planned merger into Ambuja Cements, creating a unified "One Cement Platform" to improve operational efficiency, capital use, and long-term value creation.

ACC accounted for Rs 50 crore as an exceptional expense due to the new Labour Codes implemented in November 2025, covering additional gratuity and leave encashment obligations. The company targets cost leadership of Rs 3,650 per MT by FY28 under the One Cement Platform.

New grinding units at Salai Banwa (2.4 MTPA) and Kalamboli (1 MTPA) are on track to start in Q4 FY26. ACC's premium portfolio, led by ACC Gold, continues to deliver strong EBITDA margins, supported by higher sales of trade and premium cement.

The company's concrete business also expanded, adding 14 new plants year-on-year, taking the total to 117 plants across 45 cities. Bahety appreciated the support of customers, dealers, retailers, and over seven lakh masons and contractors who contribute to the success of the Adani Cement network.

TARIFF RELIEF & POLICY BOOST

Textile industry seeks relief from US tariffs

NEW DELHI

The Indian textile and apparel industry has urged the government to introduce urgent support measures to reduce the impact of high United States tariffs, according to a recent survey by the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry conducted in December 2025.

The survey said exporters are facing strong pressure after higher US duties affected orders, prices and competitiveness. While the India European Union free trade agreement has provided some relief, the industry has asked the government to speed up the India United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement to open another large market.

CITI members have also sought a dedicated handholding scheme similar to the Focus Market Incentive Scheme. This would offer duty support to exporters entering new markets and help offset cost disadvantages faced abroad.

On the financial side, the industry has requested an extension of existing relief measures such as moratoriums on loan repayments, revised drawing power limits and continued credit support until March 31, 2026. These benefits, the survey said, should cover the entire textile value chain, including smaller Tier Two and Tier Three exporters.

The survey further recommended raising the interest subvention rate from the present 2.75 per cent to 5 per cent under the Interest Subvention Scheme. To ease liquidity stress, exporters have also sought a 30 per cent increase in collateral free loans under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme, similar to pandemic time support.

CITI highlighted high logistics costs, limited market knowledge and payment risks as key challenges. Addressing these issues, it said, would help stabilise exports and guide the industry through uncertainty into 2026. Industry leaders said timely action is vital to protect jobs, investment confidence and long term export growth nationwide.

SURYAKUMAR YADAV jumps five spots to seventh in latest ICC T20I rankings

Indian skipper's prolific New Zealand series boosts rankings as teammates dominate charts

DUBAI

India captain Suryakumar Yadav climbed five places to reach seventh position in the latest ICC men's T20I batting rankings, released on Wednesday, following an impressive run in the ongoing five-match home series against New Zealand.

The former world No.1 batter produced scores of 32, 82 not out and 57 not out in the first three matches of the series, which India currently lead 3-0. Suryakumar's consistency and match-winning ability at the middle order have helped him regain momentum just days ahead of the T20 World Cup.

India continue to dominate the upper echelons of the batting rankings, with Abhishek Sharma holding on to the top spot and Tilak Varma placed third, underlining the depth and form of the top-ranked T20I side. The rankings update comes barely 10 days before the World Cup, providing a major confidence boost for the hosts.

Ishan Kishan, who blasted a rapid 76 off 32 balls in the second T20I at Raipur, has re-entered the rankings at 64th position. Other Indian batters to make notable gains include Shivam Dube, who jumped nine places to 58th, and Rinku Singh, who surged 13 spots to 68th.

Among other teams, Afghanistan batters made significant progress after their 2-1 series win over the West Indies in Dubai. Ibrahim Zadran climbed two places to 13th, while Rahmanullah Gurbaz moved up three spots to 15th. Player-of-the-Series Darwish Rasooli leapt 29 places to 87th after scoring 156 runs.

South Africa captain Aiden Markram's unbeaten 86 lifted him into the top 20, while West Indies' Brandon King and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips also recorded sharp rises.

In bowling rankings, Afghanistan spinner Mujeeb ur Rahman moved to ninth, while India's Jasprit Bumrah and Ravi Bishnoi advanced to 13th and 19th respectively. Hardik Pandya registered gains across batting, bowling and all-rounder charts, highlighting his growing impact.

In ODIs, England batters Harry Brook and Joe Root climbed after their series win in Sri Lanka, while Adil Rashid and Dunith Wellalage made strides among bowlers.

Rahul Dravid blames spin troubles on lack of turnaround time

Former India coach links batting struggles against spin to packed multi-format schedules.

BENGALURU

Former India head coach Rahul Dravid has attributed the national team's growing struggles against spin bowling to the lack of adequate turnaround time between formats, saying the modern schedule leaves little room to rediscover and sharpen difficult skills.

Once famed for their mastery against spin, Indian batters have recently found themselves under pressure on turning tracks across formats. India suffered a 3-0 home Test whitewash against New Zealand in 2024 and a 2-0 defeat to South Africa last year, while earlier this month they lost an ODI series to New Zealand for the first time in bilateral 50-over contests.

Dravid said constant movement between formats has taken a toll on players who feature in all three versions of the game.

"One of the things I've noticed, even as a coach, is that players are just moving from one format to the other all the time," Dravid said. "We would reach a Test series three or four days before the first match and realise that some players hadn't played red-ball cricket for four or five months."

Dravid contrasted the situation with his own era, when players had extended preparation time before Test series. "In my generation, there were only two formats. I remember having almost a whole month to prepare for Tests," he said, adding that developing skills like playing spin requires sustained practice. He also referred to Shubman Gill's recent comments highlighting the challenge of adapting across formats.

Despite concerns in longer versions, Dravid backed India as favourites for the upcoming T20 World Cup starting February 8.

'Extremely lucky' Djokovic into Melbourne semi-finals as Musetti retires

MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic admitted he was "extremely lucky" to reach the Australian Open semifinals on Wednesday after Lorenzo Musetti retired injured despite holding a commanding two-set lead in their quarterfinal clash.

The fifth-seeded Italian was in complete control, leading 6-4, 6-3, 3-1, when he was forced to withdraw following treatment on his upper right leg. Musetti's movement was badly restricted, leaving him with little option but to concede the match and allow Djokovic a dramatic reprieve.

The retirement keeps alive the Serbian great's quest for a record 25th Grand Slam title. Djokovic, a 10-time champion in Melbourne, will now face either defending champion Jannik Sinner or American eighth seed Ben Shelton for a place in the final.

"I feel really sorry for him. He was the far better player — I was on my way home tonight," Djokovic said after the match. "He was in full control. It's so unfortunate. He should have been the winner today, no doubt. I am extremely lucky to get through this one." Before Musetti's injury, Djokovic endured one of his most error-strewn performances in recent memory. The 38-year-old racked up 18 unforced errors in the opening set alone and 32 overall, struggling to find rhythm off both wings as Musetti dictated play with pace, variety and superb court coverage. The Italian recovered from an early break to reel off four straight games in the first set, eventually taking it in 54 minutes.

AIDEN MARKRAM POWERS SA TO WIN OVER WEST INDIES

PAARL

Aiden Markram produced a captain's knock to power South Africa to a comprehensive nine-wicket win over the West Indies in the first T20 International at Boland Park, giving the hosts a confident start to the three-match series.

Chasing a competitive target of 173 for seven, Markram struck a career-best 86 not out off 47 balls, laced with nine fours and three sixes, as South Africa reached the target with 13 balls to spare. The win came despite the Proteas resting several key players who had featured in the SA20 final, including first-choice opener Quinton de Kock.

Markram laid the foundation with an aggressive opening stand of 83 off 47 balls alongside Lhuan-dre Pretorius, who made a fluent 44. Pretorius, not part of South Africa's T20 World Cup squad, was handed the opening role in De Kock's absence and seized his opportunity. After Pretorius' dismissal, Ryan Rickelton joined Markram and the pair added an unbroken 93-run partnership off 62 balls, with Rickelton contributing a calm 40 not out.

Earlier, West Indies struggled to build momentum despite Shimron Hetmyer's 48 off 32 balls. No other batter crossed the 30-run mark, and stand-in captain Roston Chase admitted his side fell short.

"We didn't have big partnerships and then we were poor with the ball in the powerplay," Chase said. He was leading the side in the absence of regular captain Shai Hope, who missed out after suffering a knee injury.

Left-arm spinner George Linde was named Player of the Match for his crucial spell of three for 25. Sharing the new ball, Linde returned in the final over to dismiss Hetmyer and Jason Holder while conceding just five runs.

Markram said he was encouraged by the squad's depth ahead of the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka next month. "There are a lot of guys putting their hands up. It's a good space to be in," he said, as South Africa underlined their readiness despite missing several first-choice players.

A powerful rivalry: Sabalenka, Svitolina set for Australian Open semifinal showdown

MELBOURNE

Form, history and geopolitics frame blockbuster clash as two champions chase Melbourne glory

Aryna Sabalenka and Elina Svitolina are set for a compelling Australian Open women's semifinal, a matchup shaped as much by elite tennis as by a complex backdrop both players would prefer to leave off court.

World No.1 Sabalenka, a 27-year-old from Belarus, is chasing a third Australian Open title in four years and arrives in blistering form. Known for her explosive power and booming groundstrokes, she has already won titles in Brisbane this season and is riding a 10-match winning streak in 2026. With 22 career titles, including back-to-back Australian Open crowns in 2023 and 2024 and successive US Open triumphs, Sabalenka has become the dominant force on hard courts.

Across the net will stand Svitolina, the 31-year-old Ukrainian returning to the Top 10 for the first time since her maternity break in 2022. Her run to the semifinals has been emphatic, highlighted by a stunning 59-minute demolition of third seed Coco Gauff in the quarterfinals. The Auckland title earlier this month marked her 19th career trophy and capped an impressive comeback after a mental health break in late 2025.

Both players are frequently asked about Russia's war on Ukraine, but both have consistently said they want the focus to remain on tennis. Svitolina has spoken of trying to bring moments of joy to people back home, while Sabalenka has said she supports peace. Ukrainian players do not shake hands with Russian or Belarusian opponents, a stance understood on both sides. On court, Sabalenka leads their head-to-head 5-1 and is contesting her 14th Grand Slam semifinal, having reached seven finals. Svitolina, playing her fourth major semifinal, is still chasing her first Grand Slam final appearance. "She's very powerful and consistent," Svitolina said. "I'll have to find the small opportunities and be ready to take them."

Sabalenka, unfazed by the occasion, expects a fight. "Whoever makes it there is an incredible player," she said.

Racing prodigy Atiqa Mir makes stunning WSK debut in Italy

LA CONCA (ITALY)

Eleven-year-old racing prodigy Atiqa Mir announced her arrival on the global karting stage with a sensational debut in the WSK Super Master Karting Series, becoming the first Indian to secure second place in qualifying in a fiercely competitive, male-dominated field.

Competing in the OKNJ category for the first time after stepping up from the mini class, Atiqa showcased remarkable speed and composure against 37 experienced drivers at the La Conca circuit. One of the youngest competitors on the grid and the only female entrant, the Formula 1 Academy-supported racer narrowly missed out on pole position, finishing just a tenth of a second adrift of Finland's Leo Latinen. Atiqa clocked an impressive 49.76 seconds during qualifying and was briefly on course for pole before being edged out in the closing moments. Despite missing an extra flying lap that allowed Latinen to snatch top spot, her P2 finish marked a historic achievement — the first time an Indian driver has qualified second on debut in the OKNJ class. Starting from the front row, Atiqa delivered consistent performances in the heat races, finishing fourth, sixth and seventh, and also recorded the fastest lap in the opening heat. However, her weekend took a dramatic turn in Sunday's pre-final when a mechanical failure prevented her kart from starting on the pre-grid.

Dominant Pegula sets up Australian Open semi-final against Rybakina

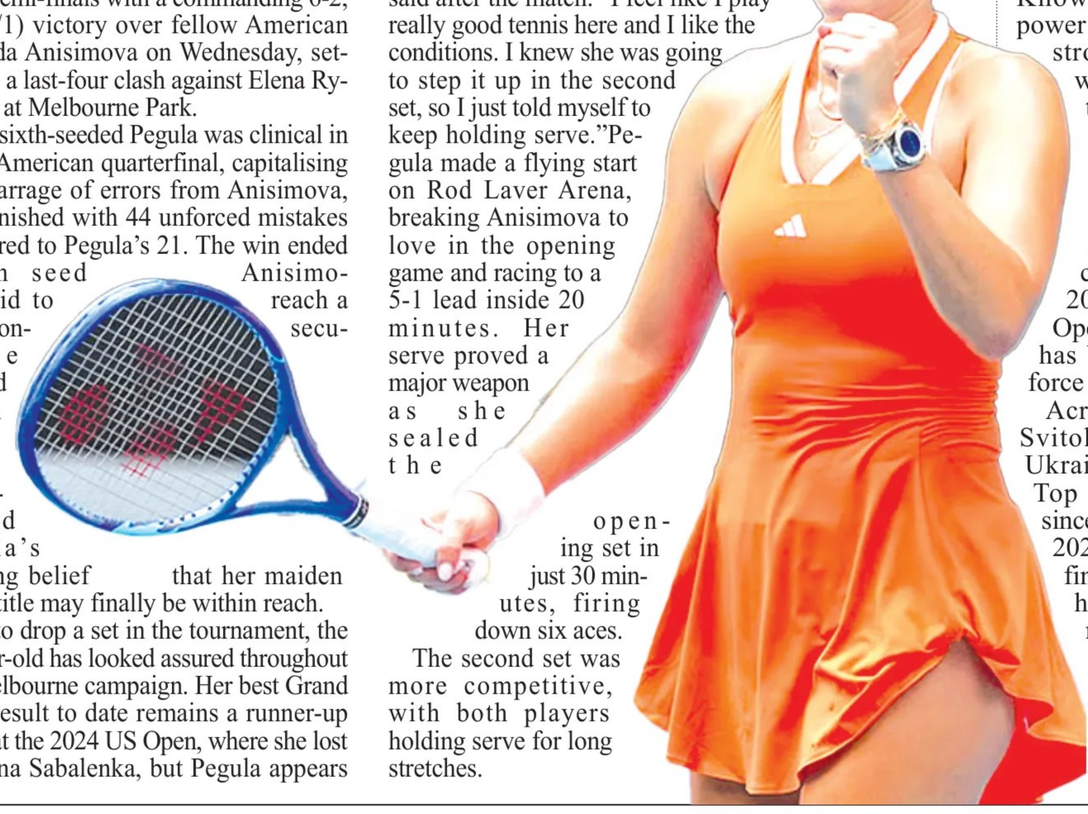
MELBOURNE

Jessica Pegula stormed into the Australian Open semi-finals with a commanding 6-2, 7-6 (7/1) victory over fellow American Amanda Anisimova on Wednesday, setting up a last-four clash against Elena Rybakina at Melbourne Park.

The sixth-seeded Pegula was clinical in an all-American quarterfinal, capitalising on a barrage of errors from Anisimova, who finished with 44 unforced mistakes compared to Pegula's 21. The win ended fourth seed Anisimova's bid to reach a third consecutive Grand Slam final and underlined Pegula's growing belief that her maiden major title may finally be within reach.

Yet to drop a set in the tournament, the 31-year-old has looked assured throughout her Melbourne campaign. Her best Grand Slam result to date remains a runner-up finish at the 2024 US Open, where she lost to Aryna Sabalenka, but Pegula appears determined to go one step further this time. "It's awesome to reach my first Australian Open semi-final," Pegula said after the match. "I feel like I play really good tennis here and I like the conditions. I knew she was going to step it up in the second set, so I just told myself to keep holding serve."Pegula made a flying start on Rod Laver Arena, breaking Anisimova to love in the opening game and racing to a 5-1 lead inside 20 minutes. Her serve proved a major weapon as she sealed the opening set in just 30 minutes, firing down six aces.

The second set was more competitive, with both players holding serve for long stretches.



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